Hafa Adai!

CUC may lower LEAC rate anew in January. » PAGE 2

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NEW PHONE BOOKS
Gov. Eloy S. Inos receives the first copies of the 2015 CNMI Phone Book from a representative of Yellow Pages Ink, the company tasked with printing out directories for both the CNMI and Guam. In receiving the new directories, Inos was quoted as saying, "They really did a good job with this! From the artwork to the information listed here, this year›s publication looks marvelous.» Also in photo is IT&E Customer Service manager Janice A. Tenorio.
CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Central govt gets disconnection notice

By JAYSON CAMACHO
jayson_camacho@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

The CNMI's central government has been issued disconnection notices for not being current with its utility bills, according to Commonwealth Utilities Corp. board chair David Sablan Jr.

During a 10-minute recess in their board meeting yesterday, Sablan told reporters that disconnection notices have been issued to central government accounts, warning them that

See CENTRAL on Page 4

IMMIGRATION LAWYERS TO EMPLOYERS:

'Apply eligible CWs for H1 visas now'

By MARK RABAGO
mark_rabago@saipantribune.com
ASSOCIATE EDITOR

Noted immigration lawyers Bruce Mailman from the CNMI and Nelson J. Xu from Guam have this important piece of advice to the islands' employers: Start applying your eligible CW workers for H1 visas now.

Speaking before yesterday's Society for Human Resource Management CNMI Chapter's 2014 Annual Conference on the topic of "Current Immigration Issues for the CNMI," Mailman and Xu agreed that the extension of the CNMI transition period—with yesterday's signing of H.R. 83—should serve as a signal for Commonwealth employees to start evaluating their nonresident workforce and transition crucial em-

See IMMIGRATION on Page 4

Inos applauds Obama for signing HR 83

By MARK RABAGO
mark_rabago@saipantribune.com
ASSOCIATE EDITOR

President Obama finally signed the massive $1.1-trillion federal spending bill into law yesterday and with it, three provisions dealing with CNMI immigration were extended for another five years.

Gov. Eloy S. Inos said the President's signing of H.R. 83 could only help the islands in sustaining the revival of its economy. Key to the massive spending measure is the extension of the islands' E-2C investors' immigration status and the CNMI and Guam's continued exemption from the national numerical cap on H visas.

"I applaud and extend my appreciation for the untiring efforts by our Congressman [Gregorio Kilili C.] Sablan, his colleagues in the House and Senate who voted for the approval of

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RELATED NEWS

➤ USCIS urges E-2C investors to apply for extension ASAP. PAGE 9

➤ H visa cap exemption extended for Guam and CNMI. PAGE 9

Tebuteb: 1 more vote to secure speakership

By MARK RABAGO
mark_rabago@saipantribune.com
ASSOCIATE EDITOR

Rep. Ramon A. Tebuteb (Ind-Saipan) is at the cusp of securing the speakership of the 19th House of Representatives after increasing his support from incoming and retained members of the lower chamber from nine to 10.

Tebuteb

The long-serving lawmaker from Precinct 3 said a member of the clique from the two other contenders has defected to his camp. He refused, however, to name the member or whether he comes from the group of incumbent House Speaker Joseph P. Deleon Guerrero (Ind-Saipan) or floor

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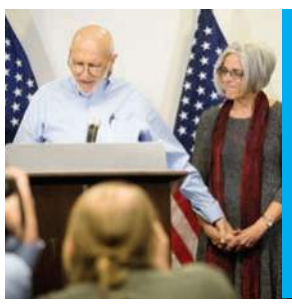

NATION
The United States and Cuba moves to restore their diplomatic relations.
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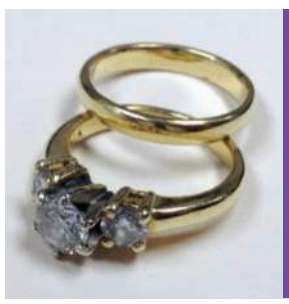

OFFBEAT
A couple of rings given to the Salvation Army fetch $21,000 for toys.
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LIFE & STYLE
Here's the story of how Kim Jong Un became the target of 'The Interview.'
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Tang bills Settlement Fund $121,834 for 5-month time

»Judge says Tang's request for compensation reasonable

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
ferdie_delatorre@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

U.S. District Court for the NMI designated judge Frances Tydingco-Gatewood yesterday ordered the Settlement Fund to pay its trustee, Joyce C. H. Tang, $121,834.48 for professional services and expenses incurred from June to October 2014.

Tydingco-Gatewood said the amount represents 90 percent of professional fees and 100 percent of all expenses incurred during the five-month period.

The Settlement Fund was also directed to hold in trust for Tang $12,405.75, which represents 10 percent of her professional fees for that period. The judge said Tang may petition for the release of the 10 percent retainage every three months.

Tang asked for compensation in the amounts of $122,182.50 for professional services and $10,411.84 for expenses, for a total of $132,594.34 for the five-month period.

Tang's professional services quadrupled from June 2014 to October 2014.

For June, the professional services was $9,932.50; for July, $18,720; for August, $21,462.50; for September, $35,705; and for October, $36,362.50; for a total of $122,182.50.

For expenses, the amount also increased significantly from $261.58 in June to $6,477.06 in October. For July, expenses was $727.01; for August, $452.70; and for September, $2,493.49.

The judge said she reviewed the invoices and finds them reasonable.

"The court is satisfied with the work performed by the trustee during this time frame," she said.

Last October, Tydingco-Gatewood ordered the Settlement Fund to pay Tang $39,656.80 for professional services and expenses for March to May 2014. Last April, the judge also ordered the Settlement Fund to pay Tang $25,634.25 covering the months of January and February 2014.

CUC may lower LEAC rate anew

By JAYSON CAMACHO
jayson_camacho@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

"If the oil markets stay on the trends that they are today, the first part of the month in January 2015, we'll probably have another adjustment in lowering the LEAC rate again."

Thus said Commonwealth Utilities Corp. executive director Alan Fletcher yesterday at a CUC board meeting.

Fletcher said they are having some luck with diesel prices, which was down by 26 percent in November and continues to fall in December and may very well roll over into the next year.

The levelized energy adjustment clause or LEAC represents the fuel component of a power bill. It is the amount CUC spends to buy fuel.

CUC has already decreased its LEAC rates thrice this year. The first time was in September, from $.30426 per kWh to $.28902 per kWh. CUC reduced its LEAC rate again in November to $.25168 per kWh. The third time CUC did this was this month, to $.23616 per kWh.

"On Dec. 1, 2014, we had a 6.16-percent decrease for the December usage, which customers will see in their billings that will come out on January," Fletcher told board members.

CUC gets their LEAC pricing on the last day of the month through the first day of the new month from Mobil Marianas and that's where CUC sees a threshold for a change.

LEAC adjustments are made when the "Mean of Platts Singapore" or MOPS monthly pricing equals or exceeds 4.5 percent of the average per gallon cost of fuel used in the calculation of the LEAC charge.

Pai takes oath for second term as public auditor

Public Auditor Michael Pai was sworn in for another six-year term at the helm of the Office of Public Auditor yesterday morning at the Governor's Office on Capital Hill.

Gov. Eloy S. Inos administered the oath of office to Pai, who passed the Senate and House of Representatives' confirmation processes with flying colors last month.

"Mike has worked selflessly to ensure that the performance of government programs and services meet the standard of reasonable assurance that they comply with the intent of laws, regulations, and policies. I am confident that Mike will revisit the issue of resolving current and outstanding single audit findings, that he will ensure transparency and accountability in government services, and perform his duties to prevent fraud, waste, and abuse in our government system," said Inos after Pai's oath-taking.

In an earlier interview with *Saipan Tribune*, Pai said he appreciates the governor's confidence in him and thanks the House and the Senate for their support in giving him another term.

"Serving as the CNMI public auditor is the biggest honor and highlight of my career and I want to thank the governor, the Legislature, and the community of the CNMI for their confidence and support," he said.

The governor reappointed Pai as public auditor last Oct. 6. Pai succeeded Michael Sablan to the position. ***(Mark Rabago)***

Summer aimed as next phase of bird translocation project

By DENNIS B. CHAN
dennis_chan@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

The Division of Fish and Wildlife is targeting June or July of next year for the next phase of the Mariana Avifauna Conservation plan, according to division director Manny Pangelinan. The MAC project, in part, translocates birds to islands in the Marianas that are free of the brown tree snake, with the aim to create self-sustaining, satellite populations there.

In an interview yesterday, Pangelinan said they are just focusing now on the logistics of next year's trip. How many birds will be translocated, the size of crew, and the transportation needed, as well as which island will be targeted for translocation are things to evaluate first, he said.

The MAC project has seven focal species for concern: the Marianas Fruit Dove, Rufous Fantail, Tinian Monarch, Nightingale Reed-warbler, Bridled White-eye, Rota White-eye, and Golden White-eye .Six target islands also have been proposed: Sarigan, Guiguan, Alamagan, Pagan, Agrihan, and Asuncion.

Pangelinan said yesterday that in order for DFW to "maximize" the trip, he'd like to sit down with their fish and wildlife biologists, adding that life history studies of fish might be done as well this summer.

Beginning in 2008, Bridled and Golden White-Eyes, Mariana Fruit Doves, and Rufous Fantails have been successfully translocated to Sariguan, according to a MAC working group report.

The report also proposes a conservation timeline that extends to 2032, and highlights Pagan as possible staging area for cost-effective access to Alamagan, Agrihan and Asucion, but also notes that this would be "depending upon access allowed" to MAC by the U.S. Department of Defense.

DoD has reportedly taken an interest in Pagan for military use. Pangelinan said DFW evaluates concerns of "competing use" and will have to determine "whether that's the best place [Pagan] to continue with program."

The MAC report states that using Pagan's airstrip could "speed up" translocation to more northerly islands, and may reduce costs as the helicopters used for transportation have limited weight capacities.

MAC has proposed monitoring of translocated birds through radio-tracking, tagging, and surveying. Next year, Pangelinan said, they aim to quantify and analyze the effectiveness of the program, and "to see how birds are doing" on Sarigan.

A total of 184 birds total have been translocated from Saipan and Tinian to Sarigan from 2008 to 2012, according to MAC.

COTA to solicit comments on its facility site proposal

The Commonwealth Office of Transit Authority and the Commonwealth Public Transportation Advisory Board will be hosting a public meeting to discuss a plan to put up a bus and vehicle maintenance and repair and storage building and facility along Middle Road, in Puerto Rico, Saipan.

The meeting will be held on Dec. 30, 2014, at the Garapan Elementary School cafeteria, from 6pm to 7:30pm.

"It is a meeting to gather public input and all stakeholders and interested parties are cordially invited to participate," said COTA special assistant for public transportation Thomas J. Camacho.

"It is essential to ensure that the location and process of developing plans for the new facilities do not discriminate against people based on race, color or national origin," he said.

It is also a requirement by the U.S Federal Transit Administration and COTA's public involvement policy to obtain the public's input.

"Strengthening our commitment to the communities that we serve is the best gift we can give the CNMI," he said.

For more information about the meeting, contact COTA at 664-2682 or email cota@gov.mp. ***(Jayson Camacho)***

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Basa appeals her 17.5-year prison term for sex trafficking

Annette Nakatsukasa Basa is appealing her 17.5-year prison term for sex trafficking of children to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit.

Attorney Steven Pixley, court-appointed counsel for the 36-year-old Basa, filed yesterday a notice of appeal in the U.S. District Court for the NMI.

Pixley said Basa will appeal to the Ninth Circuit the court's Dec. 5, 2014 judgment and will seek to reverse the 17.5-year prison sentence the court slapped against her.

The notice of appeal contained no other details.

At the Dec. 5 sentencing, U.S. District Court for the NMI Chief Judge Ramona V. Manglona ordered that after serving the 17.5 years in prison, Basa will be placed on five years of supervised release.

Manglona also ordered Basa, among other things, to undergo a mental health assessment and complete any treatment while in federal prison custody.

In Basa's sentencing memorandum, Pixley claimed that the defendant was sexually abused by some police officers when she was young and that the abuse left her with a variety of psychological problems.

Last February, Basa pleaded guilty to a count of sex trafficking of children.

According to the plea deal, Basa recruited, enticed, and harbored a 15-year-old girl to engage in commercial sex acts from April 1, 2013, to July 16, 2013.

Using a cell phone, Basa arranged meetings with adult men and the girl, and then drove the girl to meeting sites for the purpose of having her have sex with those men.

Basa gave the girl condoms for those meetings. In exchange, Basa received money or methamphetamine or "ice" from the men.

The indictment charged Basa and former firefighter Richard S. Benavente of engaging in sexual exploitation and sex trafficking of two minors.

Benavente has already pleaded guilty. ***(Ferdie de la Torre)***

American Samoa man accused of creating ruckus during flight

PAGO PAGO, American Samoa (AP)—A man has been accused of hurling racial slurs and curse words at a flight crew, creating such a ruckus on a flight from Honolulu to the territory of American Samoa that the pilots nearly turned the plane around.

Two flight attendants and a pilot told police that Duke Ueli Viena was intoxicated when he got on the flight Friday night in Honolulu, according to court records. He wanted more drinks while other passengers were boarding the flight.

After the Hawaiian Airlines flight took off, he swore and made racial comments toward flight attendants, the crew alleged in court documents.

Pilots almost turned back to Honolulu before other passengers and Samoan chiefs on the plane were able to calm him. Viena, of the Samoan capital of Pago Pago, was arrested when the plane landed in the U.S. territory.

INOS

From Page 1

HR 83, and the Office of Insular Affairs for constantly looking out for the interests of the people of the CNMI. Furthermore, my administration certainly appreciates President Obama's quick action on approving HR 83. Our collaborative efforts with our federal partners can only result in positive outcomes for our islands," he said.

Interestingly, H.R. 83, a territorial bill co-sponsored by Sablan, became the vehicle for passage of the Consolidated and Further Continuing Appropriations Act of 2015, which funds the federal government for the next year.

HR 83 also extends a bar on foreign nationals from seeking asylum in the Northern Mariana Islands. This, together with the E2-C visa extension and the H visa cap policy, would all otherwise expire on Dec. 31, 2014, without the enactment of H.R. 83 into law.

U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services issued a press release yesterday that the two provisions (E-2C and H visa caps) of the Consolidated Natural Resources Act of 2008 have been extended until Dec. 31, 2019.

"Public Law 110-229 included a provision that exempted H-1B and H-2B nonimmigrant workers performing temporary labor or services in the CNMI and Guam from the congressionally-mandated H-1B and H-2B annual numerical limitations (the 'caps') from Nov. 28, 2009 to Dec. 31, 2014. The enactment into law of the Consolidated and Further Continuing Appropriations Act, 2015 (H.R. 83) extends this cap exemption for five years During this time period, a nonimmigrant worker granted H-1B or H-2B status for employment in Guam or the CNMI is not counted toward the H-1B or H-2B caps."

USCIS spokesperson Marie Thérèse Sebrechts said more information on filing for H-1B or H-2B nonimmigrant workers is provided in the Instructions for Form I-129 Petition for a Nonimmigrant Worker.

Sebrechts said that USCIS is encouraging current E-2C investors to apply immediately for an extension, in order to minimize a lapse in valid nonimmigrant status.

She also clarified that E-2C nonimmigrants are not eligible for parole in the CNMI.

"Likewise, anyone who has previously held any nonimmigrant status is not eligible to apply for or to receive parole in the CNMI, regardless whether or not the nonimmigrant status has expired."

TEBUTEB

From Page 1

leader Rep. Ralph Demapan (R-Saipan).

"I have been meeting regularly with our colleagues to discuss priorities and key issues that need to be addressed in the 19th Legislature," said Tebuteb. "The positive attitude and collegiality among this group is extremely refreshing."

Some who are not yet in Tebuteb's camp have questioned whether he will be able to work with the incoming administration of governor-elect Eloy S. Inos and lieutenant governor-elect Ralph DLG. Torres.

However, he assured the incoming administration that he would be a team player and work with the Executive Branch.

"My colleagues are definitely ready to work with and support the Executive Branch. We will draft and support good legislation that is in the best interest of our community," he said.

Tebuteb has served 12 years as a Precinct 3 representative and is the current chairman of the Saipan and Northern Islands Legislative Delegation.

To win the speakership, the three contenders—Tebuteb, Deleon Guerrero, and Demapan—must muster at least 11 votes.

Saipan Tribune earlier reported that Tebuteb can expect to garner the support of nine independents, among them Reps. Edmund Villagomez, Ralph N. Yumul, Anthony T. Benavente, Roman Benavente, Larry Deleon Guerrero, and incoming representatives Edwin Propst, Vinson Sablan, and Blas Jonathan "B.J." Attao.

Deleon Guerrero, meanwhile, is said to be counting on the votes of Rep. Anthony P. Sablan (Ind-Saipan) and freshmen lawmakers Edwin Aldan of Tinian and Francis Taimanao of Saipan.

Demapan can count on the seven NMI Republican Party lawmakers elected to the 19th Congress—Felicidad Ogumoro, John Paul P. Sablan, George Camacho, and newcomers Angel Demapan, Joseph "Leepan" T. Guerrero, and Glenn L. Maratita.

The 18th Legislature will *sine die* is on Jan. 5. 2015, while the 19th Legislature will be sworn in on Jan. 12, 2015.

IMMIGRATION

From Page 1

ployees to the U.S. immigration system.

"I think employers here should first of all take a look at the workforce and see who is eligible for U.S. visas. A lot of these people can also qualify for better level visas that they have. You have to change the job description, the job skills, and you have to qualify. H1 [visa] is for a specialty occupation, which means that a person has to qualify, usually a four-year degree, but there are certain exemptions and the job has to qualify," said Mailman of Mailman & Kara, LLC.

Mailman, however, said while many current CWs are actually doing H1-level jobs in the CNMI, they would have to, in essence, give CWs a higher job designation in order to qualify for H1 visa.

"Maybe your accountant will have to become a comptroller and you have to demonstrate there is a real change. If you can do that, you have a good shot at it. If you can't do that, it's not gonna work. They're very fussy about this."

He also acknowledged that the CNMI's lack of a prevailing wage survey is hindering more companies from applying for H1 visas.

"We need a prevailing wage survey. We've been using Guam's and H1 petitions using the Guam scale is quite a bit higher."

Mailman said a U.S. visa petition recently came through where an H1 applicant earning $45,000 a year was approved and because they needed to use Guam's prevailing wage, this particular applicant must now be paid in the $70,000-a-year range.

"It's something that each employer must decide if they can do it and if they can afford to do it. Hopefully we can get a wage survey and things will become more sensible," he said.

Xu, a partner in Bauman, Kondas & Xu, one of Guam's leading law firms in U.S. immigration and business law, echoed Mailman's call for employers to start shifting CWs to H1 visas if they qualify.

"H1 has such tremendous benefit. First of all, these people are not in low-end jobs, they're educated and they're in specialty occupations like engineers, doctors, and all these people. Then they can stay here for six years. Renewal is three years at a time so you save a lot of money from it. And then they can switch to green card very easily and it becomes a permanent solution. Compare H1 to one-year only CW and clearly H1 is a much better alternative," he said.

Xu said employers must get rid of the trauma and stigma associated with giving loyal, long-term, and valuable employees green cards.

"Many employers I've talked to, they're reluctant to apply their employees for green cards because they worry that if their employers have it they will leave, which is likely to happen, unfortunately. But if you treat them right, give them a higher wage, benefits, and stuff like that and of course they might still stay. On the other hand, what are you going to do after five years? Everybody's gone so you need to select who you want and actively select who you want to keep and start working on it."

He, however, acknowledged that most of the CWs can't qualify for H1 visas because they don't have the qualification for H1 and that's where family-based visas can help.

"This is a SHRM conference. [But] there's family-based and you have to explore other options. If you have a CW worker who has a U.S. citizen child who is turning 21 years old in the next five years, then you may not want to do anything and just wait for the child to turn 21. That's a nice way. Family-based, if they're qualified, is very easy. Employment-based is difficult."

Mailman agreed with Xu when he said, "many of our workers here have U.S. citizen children who will in the next few years will turn 21 years old. These children can sponsor their parents. That's a source of stability."

Xu also said that CNMI employers must not treat the enactment of H.R. 83 into law as the beginning of the end of the yearly rush of renewing CW applicants, but the start of preparations for the end of the transition period.

"This is not the end. This is the beginning. It's time because five years is the end of the five-year transition. There will be no more extensions from what we know on what the law says. Everybody must think about how to transition to the U.S. immigration system and depart from the CNMI immigration system. Even though the CNMI immigration system is controlled by the U.S. system, we need to move into the U.S. system and apply for green card and apply for U.S. immigrant visas that make sense to them. That's the take away. I don't want to see any employer wait until 4 ½ years later and they all come to me and say 'Nelson, we need help.' I'll tell them 'this time we're closed' because next time we won't be able to do anything."

SHRM"s 2014 Annual Conference was held at the Pacific Islands Club Saipan's Charley's Cabaret and it was attended by over 100 human resources practitioners on the island. U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services' Diane Zedde also spoke during the event.

CENTRAL

From Page 1

failure to pay their bills will make them subject to disconnection.

The central government, together with the Public School System and the Commonwealth Healthcare Corp., are three of CUC's biggest customers. All three also have significant past arrears with CUC.

Sablan said that, except for past arrears owed, PSS and the healthcare corporation are both current with their monthly payments.

"It's the government agencies within the central government that are not keeping current," he said.

"With PSS and CHCC, they remain current and we have a working relation with them in that regard," he said.

CHCC and CUC are under a court order that prevents CUC from disconnecting the hospital but in that same order, CHCC has to remain current with its monthly billing.

"All we need to do now with CHCC is sit down and discuss on how they are going to pay the $12 million past arrears that they owe us," Sablan said.

PSS, on the other hand, is also current and has been paying $5,000 a month on their past due amounts. Sablan noted that PSS is looking into increasing that payment based on the funds that are available.

"With those two we have some sort of arrangement to pay their current bills which they are doing now and address the past dues as soon as there are some stabilization in their capability to pay their utility bills, so I am just waiting to see if there could be any bills that will be allocated by the Legislature or some sort of assistance to try to pay down their past dues," Sablan said.

With the central government, a lot of its agencies also owe CUC past due amounts but CUC hasn't worked on any arrangements with them, so at this point CUC had to give them disconnection notices, according to Sablan.

"So I encourage them to go up to the Department of Finance and discuss this matter so that they can settle these bills. What we want is at least to get those bills current like CHCC and PSS," he said.

CUC executive director Alan Fletcher said that although they are staying current, with the current account receivables at $27 million in past arrears, CUC has no working capital and no reserves to ride out long periods of non-payment.

This could result in underfunded operations such as deferred maintenance, lack of supplies for typhoon readiness, and lack of monies for capital improvements and stipulated order projects.

For past arrears the central government collectively owes CUC $3 million, CHCC owes $13 million, and PSS owes $8 million.

Ex-BECQ staff gets 4 yrs. in prison for burglary, theft

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
ferdie_delatorre@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Superior Court Associate Judge David A. Wiseman has slapped a former staff of the Bureau of Environmental and Coastal Quality with a four-year prison term for burglarizing the house of his co-worker and, while on pre-trial release, stealing 72 feet of copper wire at Hopwood Junior High School.

At a sentencing hearing Wednesday afternoon, Wiseman ordered Elmer Duenas Sablan to serve a sentence of four years, two years of which shall be served without parole, for burglary and theft.

After completing his sentence, Sablan, 43, will be placed on probation for five years.

Sablan was required to pay $1,318 in restitution to three victims for their uncovered items, including an iPhone, an iPad, a watch, and a diamond necklace, and $1,207.25 in restitution to the Commonwealth Utilities Corp. for the stolen copper wire.

Sablan was also ordered to pay a $500 fine, $100 court assessment fee, plus probation fee. He was required to write letters of apology to the victims and will be prohibited from entering any poker parlor or other establishment that has gambling during his probation.

Sablan and his court-appointed counsel, Janet H. King, signed a plea agreement with the government, represented by assistant attorney general Heather B. Barcinas.

Last July 16, the defendant pleaded guilty to burglary and theft in the first and second case respectively.

In considering aggravating factors, Wiseman said Sablan planned the burglary of a co-worker's residence who was hosting a visiting athlete, here to compete in Saipan's annual athletic competitions.

Wiseman said the visiting athlete returned from her practice to find her personal items stolen, some of which were precious and irreplaceable jewelry.

Sablan also stole a laptop, tablet, guitar, iPhone, and iPad.

Wiseman said the victims' statement expresses the changes they had to make to their lifestyle and are apprehensive for their safety in their home and neighborhood.

Wiseman said the victims' reputation of hosting visiting athletes has been placed in jeopardy as a result of the burglary.

According to a police detective, Sablan and Larry M. Sugiyama burglarized a house being rented by Saipan runner Steven Johnson and his girlfriend, Kaitlin Mattos, on April 17, 2014. At that time, the couple had a guest triathlete from the Philippines.

Sugiyama told police that it was Sablan's idea to burglarize the house in Chalan Kiya because he lost his paycheck after playing poker at Lucky 7 Poker in Susupe.

While waiting to be sentenced for the burglary, Sablan committed another crime while he was on pretrial release. On Oct. 29, 2014, at 3:30am, Sablan was arrested again for theft, criminal mischief, and criminal contempt of court over the stealing of copper wire at Hopwood.

Sablan admitted to entering Hopwood, climbing the utility poles belonging to CUC, and cutting 72 feet of copper wire valued at $293.

Wiseman said there is a substantial need to reflect on the seriousness of these offenses. He said the crimes of burglary and theft continue to have a negative and chilling effect for people of the CNMI. He is also deeply concerned that the crime of theft was committed by the defendant while on pretrial release.

"This shows a complete disrespect for this court, the laws of the CNMI and his family, who posted security for his pretrial release and committed themselves to the court for their assistance in supervising his release," he said.

Wiseman said Sablan betrayed their trust and violated the terms and conditions of his pretrial release, and jeopardized the security his family posted for him.

Wiseman noted as mitigating factors that defendant is a family man in his mid 40's and has been active in community activities such as Little League and others and does not have any criminal history.

The judge said Sablan turned himself in for the burglary and confessed and expressed remorse at the hearing, and when arrested for what he did.

Wiseman said he also considered the several letters requesting leniency.

For the crime of theft, Wiseman said he finds the circumstances of this crime to be terrible. He said the many copper wire thefts on island have resulted in many adverse consequences, from the once aesthetic pathway lights being terminated to nursery schools having to close their facilities, to residents having power outages.

"Hopefully, the Hopwood School was not drastically affected by defendant's actions," Wiseman added.

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Ex-convict gets 8 yrs. in prison for gas station robbery

Superior Court Associate Judge Teresa K. Kim-Tenorio has imposed an eight-year prison term against Joseph C. San Nicolas, an ex-convict who, together with a habitual offender, robbed the Mobil gas station in Chalan Piao.

"The court must send a strong message to defendant that such behavior is not without consequences, and must restore some sense of security to the victims and to the community," said Kim-Tenorio in an order last week.

The judge sentenced San Nicolas to 13 years imprisonment, all suspended except for eight years, to be served without the possibility of parole. He was given credit for 58 days of time served.

San Nicolas was also ordered to pay a $500 fine, plus all court costs and probation fees, and was required to perform 300 hours of community service during a five-year supervised probation.

Kim-Tenorio

Kim-Tenorio said she took into account San Nicolas' two children, his three sisters, his ailing mother, and the hardship a prison sentence would impose on them.

However, Kim-Tenorio said, she also considered San Nicolas' five prior convictions, which include assault and battery, burglary, and robbery.

In this case, the judge pointed out that San Nicolas and his co-defendant, Christopher M. Igisomar, used dangerous weapons to forcibly rob one of the victims, Joanne Omengebar.

Along with the cash and purse, San Nicolas also took from Omengebar her sense of security, as evidenced by her statement that the experience was traumatic for her, and that she was suffering from depression and stress, Kim-Tenorio said.

The Office of the Attorney General charged San Nicolas with armed robbery, conspiracy to commit armed robbery, assault with a dangerous weapon, theft, and disturbing the peace.

San Nicolas pleaded guilty to robbery as part of a plea deal. The remaining charges were dropped.

San Nicolas and Igisomar robbed the Mobil gas station in Chalan Piao on Feb. 8, 2014, on Saipan. San Nicolas held a rock to the gas attendant's neck, while Igisomar threatened the cashier, Omengebar, with a machete, and demanded that she give him money from the cash register.

The defendants then stole Omengebar's purse and cash from the cash register.

Last September, Kim-Tenorio slapped Igisomar with an eight-year prison term, without the possibility of parole, for robbery. ***(Ferdie de la Torre)***

Filipino mayor expresses support for Guam statue

HAGATNA, Guam (AP)— The mayor of the hometown of Philippine revolution hero Apolinario Mabini says he looks forward to the day when a statue of Mabini will be unveiled in a Guam village.

Speaking Tuesday during the signing of an agreement to strengthen friendship and cooperation between Tanauan City in the Philippines and Asan in Guam, Tanauan Mayor Antonio Halili said he was sad that the statue of Mabini was not unveiled Monday in Asan due to protests from residents, *Pacific Daily News* reported.

The covering draped over the statue reminds him of a shroud, he said.

"It's a little bit sad seeing our national hero who is from Tanauan City, the city where I, that I represent—a national hero...is wrapped like a corpse," he said during the ceremony at the Asan-Maina community center.

Mabini was exiled to Guam from 1901 to 1903. A life-size concrete monument of Mabini was to be unveiled near the community center.

However, the unveiling was delayed after protesters said they were not informed of the project. They also questioned whether Mabini has a strong connection to the village.

Halili said he's hopeful protesters will remove their objections. He would be happy to visit Guam again for another ceremony, he said.

The signed "Agreement on Friendship and Cooperation" sets a goal of strengthening friendship and cooperation between the two local governments through exchanges in culture, education and sports and encourages economic development and tourism, according to the Philippine consul general's office.

The intention for the statue remains, the consul general on Guam said in a statement.

"We stand by our intention for this project, which is for the Mabini statue to be the symbol of the friendship and cooperation that we seek to establish between the village of Asan and the city of Tanauan," said Consul General Marciano de Borja.

CHCC awarded $750,000 grant for healthcare transformation

Gov. Eloy S. Inos announced yesterday that the Commonwealth Healthcare Corp. has been awarded a State Innovation Model Design grant in the amount of $750,000.

"I was very happy to receive notification that the [Centers for Medicare and Medicaid] Innovation Center selected the CNMI and will enter into a cooperative agreement with CHCC," Inos said. "The funding will enable the CNMI, CHCC, and public, private, and resident stakeholders to work collaboratively to develop a CNMI-wide plan to support healthcare transformation in CNMI with the aim to decrease the overall cost of healthcare, improve patient experience and satisfaction with quality care and outcomes, and improve population health. I would also like to express my congratulations to CHCC for preparing the competitive application and look forward to the commencement of the planning activities. The CNMI government will be an active participant in the planning and design process."

Esther Muna, CEO of CHCC added, "I was ecstatic to hear of the award because healthcare transformation is critically needed and the CMS funding will enable CNMI stakeholders to undertake a design process to identify priorities and to develop plans to improve services and care not only on Saipan, but also on Tinian and Rota. The plan will improve the integration of healthcare services between the public health and clinical services units of the CHCC and private providers. The CNMI SIM will also help us understand the total cost of care and the health and insurance needs of all residents, including the large population of foreign workers."

"The Model Design process," Muna said, "will be data driven and based on the vastly improved data that will be made available to us regarding the cost of care. I appreciate that Staywell, Calvo, and Moylan insurance companies supported the application and look forward to the joint analysis of the costs of care and utilization, together with the CNMI Medicaid program and the CMS. We recognize that this will be an intense effort and require real commitment to be successful. We plan to work collaboratively with all the stakeholders, including the payers and providers, to identify needs and priority areas where we can improve care, population health, access, and at the same time, lessen costs."

Muna added that "should the CNMI be successful in this effort, then the CNMI would be eligible to apply for State Innovation Model 'Test' funding to implement the plan." ***(Office of the Governor)***

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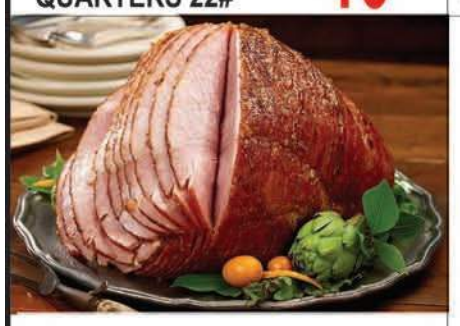

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MINA launches Plastic Bag Challenge

With the holiday season in full force, the Micronesia Islands Nature Alliance is giving the community a chance to win exciting prizes through their Plastic Bag Challenge *12 Days of Giveaways*.

From now through Dec. 30, 2014, people who use any type of reusable or eco-friendly bag at any grocery store and snap a photo of themselves using it at the checkout counter can enter MINA's Plastic Bag Challenge *12 Days of Giveaways* for a chance to win one of the daily prizes, and all qualifying participants will receive a reusable travel mug. They must post their photo on MINA's Facebook page with a caption #iChooseToReuse.

According to program manager Becky Furey, "the Plastic Bag Challenge partners with businesses and aims to reduce the amount of plastic bags that end up in the environment. They are one of the most commonly littered items in the CNMI. With the community's support, we can reduce plastic pollution on land and sea. MINA wants to reward those that refuse plastic bags at the checkout counter. We encourage everyone to be more environmentally conscious during this holiday shopping season."

To learn more about MINA's Plastic Bag Challenge *12 Days of Giveaways* visit MINA's Facebook page or email minaoutreach@gmail.com. ***(MINA)***

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Air Force, Navy training on FDM, at Warning Area 517

ASAN, Guam--The U.S. Air Force will conduct training at the island of Farallon de Medinilla Dec. 22 from 7am to 6pm.

The U.S. Navy will conduct training at Warning Area 517 on Dec. 22 and 23 from noon to 8pm.

The general public, especially fishermen, commercial pilots and marine tour operators, are advised to stay clear from the area during the times and dates indicated.

The general location of the training on the island of Farallon de Medinilla will be on a 10-nautical mile radius on all quadrants.

W-517 is an irregular shaped polygon composed of 14,000 nautical square miles of airspace that begins south of Guam and extends south-southwest in international waters. This will affect fishing in the vicinity of Santa Rosa Reef and Galvez Bank. ***(PR)***

UOG to graduate 237 on Dec. 21

This Sunday, the University of Guam will recognize 237 prospective graduates during its fall 2014 commencement ceremonies at 2pm on Sunday, Dec. 21, 2014, at the UOG Calvo Field House. Of the expected graduates, 184 will receive undergraduate degrees and 54 will receive graduate degrees.

Dr. Lawrence J. Cunningham, a Chamorro historian, educator and civic leader, will be the featured speaker at the ceremony. The public is invited to attend.

For more on the University of Guam Fall 2014 Commencement Ceremonies visit http://www.uog.edu/fall2014-commencement. ***(PR)***

USCIS urges E-2C investors to apply for extension ASAP

The enactment into law of the Consolidated and Further Continuing Appropriations Act, 2015 (H.R. 83) extends the CNMI Investor E-2C nonimmigrant visa classification until Dec. 31, 2019. U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services will now accept petitions for extension of E-2C nonimmigrant status.

USCIS encourages current E-2C investors to apply immediately for an extension, in order to minimize a lapse in valid nonimmigrant status. Apply using Form I-129, "Petitioner for a Nonimmigrant Worker" along with the E-1/E-2 Classification Supplement found on pages 9-10 of the form. Detailed instructions are found on the same web page. Please disregard the note in the Form I-129 instructions indicating that the E-2C nonimmigrant classification expires on Dec. 31, 2014; a correction will be made to reflect the five-year extension.

E-2C nonimmigrants are not eligible for parole in the CNMI. Likewise, anyone who has previously held any nonimmigrant status is not eligible to apply for or to receive parole in the CNMI, regardless whether or not the nonimmigrant status has expired.

The Consolidated Natural Resources Act of 2008 created the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands-Only Investor (E-2C) nonimmigrant visa classification. This allowed eligible foreign, long-term investors and their spouses and children to remain lawfully present in the CNMI from Nov. 28, 2009, through December 2014. As noted previously, the E-2C nonimmigrant visa program has now been extended until Dec. 31, 2019. This classification was intended to help as the CNMI transitioned from the CNMI permit system to U.S. immigration laws.

See www.uscis.gov/cnmi for additional information, or go to www.uscis.gov and make a free appointment to see a USCIS officer at your local office. ***(USCIS)***

H visa cap exemption extended

»USCIS continues to accept petitions exempt from the cap for five more years

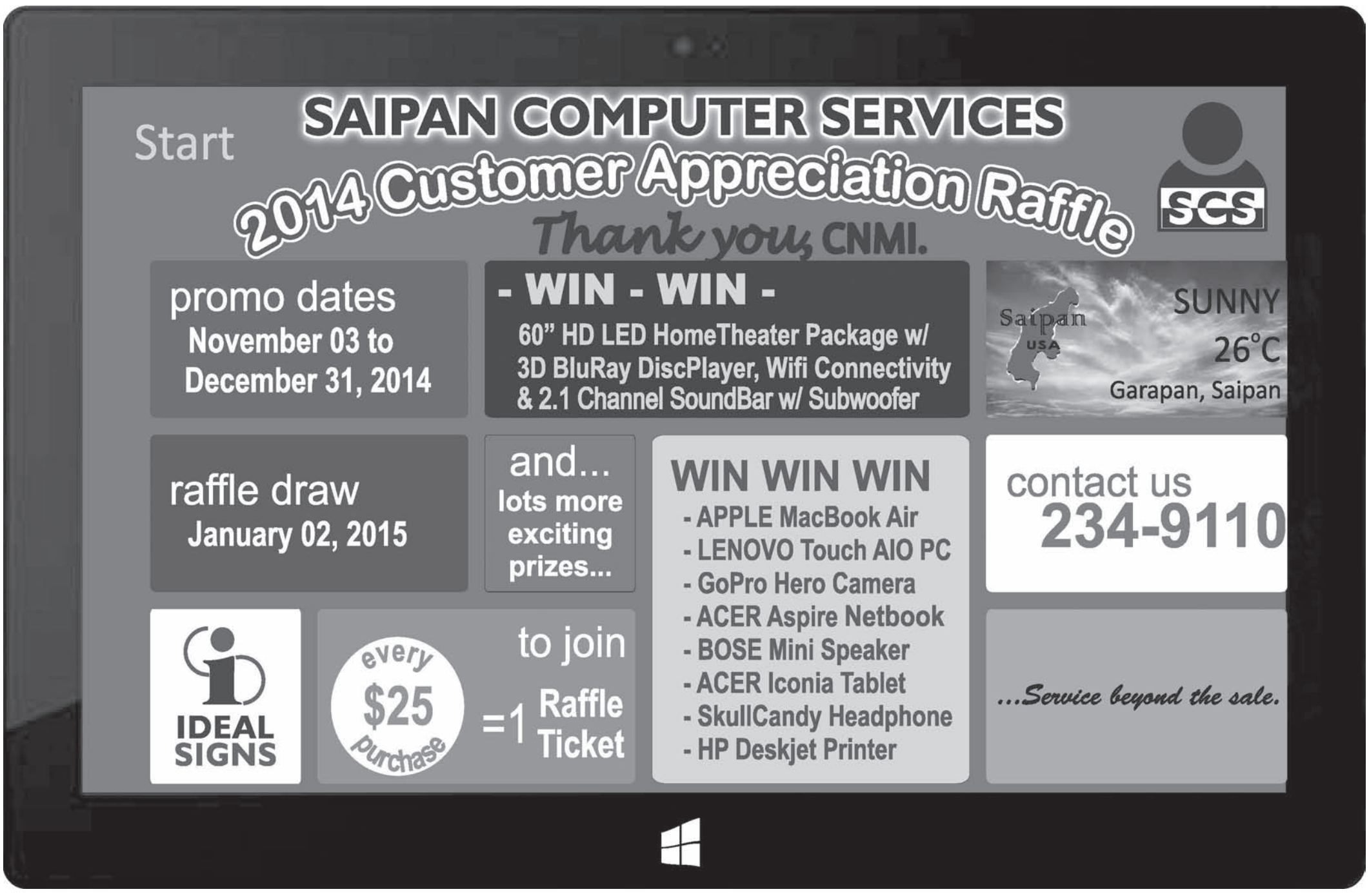
The Consolidated Natural Resources Act of 2008, Public Law 110-229, included a provision that exempted H-1B and H-2B nonimmigrant workers performing temporary labor or services in the CNMI and Guam from the congressionally-mandated H-1B and H-2B annual numerical limitations (the "caps") from Nov. 28, 2009, to Dec. 31, 2014.

The enactment into law of the Consolidated and Further Continuing Appropriations Act, 2015 (H.R. 83) extends this cap exemption for five years until Dec. 31, 2019. During this time period, a nonimmigrant worker granted H-1B or H-2B status for employment in Guam or the CNMI is not counted toward the H-1B or H-2B caps.

More information on for filing for H-1B or H-2B nonimmigrant workers is provided in the Instructions for Form I-129 Petition for a Nonimmigrant Worker.

For general information about the H-1B classification, see H-1B Specialty Occupations.

For general information about the H-2B classification, see H-2B Temporary Non-Agricultural Workers. ***(USCIS)***



Opinion

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Jayvee L. Vallejera EDITOR
jayvee_vallejera@saipantribune.com

Mark Rabago ASSOCIATE EDITOR
mark_rabago@saipantribune.com

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EDITORIAL

New day for Cuba-US relations

First things first: The release of Alan Gross, which this newspaper has called for practically from the moment he was detained five years ago, is indeed welcome news. All Americans should all rejoice in his freedom. "The best Hanukkah," the overjoyed Gross told reporters. "What a blessing it is to be a citizen of this country."

Second; This is a new beginning, a milestone in U.S.-Cuba relations, but President Obama's opening to Cuba is not yet the "game-changer" others have labeled it. The game won't change until Cuba makes effective, substantive moves toward democratic reform in Cuba.

Third: Raul Castro told the nation on Wednesday that Cuba agreed to restore full diplomatic relations "without renouncing a single one of our principles." If those principles include maintaining a chokehold on liberty inside Cuba, the hopes of the Cuban people and the exile community will be dashed once again.

Fourth: The Obama administration managed to get Alan Gross home without falling into the trap of engaging in a hostage-for-spies swap. Gross was not, never has been, an intelligence asset and never should have been in prison. The swap of an American intelligence agent imprisoned in Cuba for the three convicted Cuban spies in U.S. prisons that was part of the arrangement that brought Gross home, together with the release of Cuban political prisoners, has numerous Cold War precedents, however. Why it could not have been arranged earlier, before Gross came close to dying in a Cuban prison, remains a major unanswered question.

Fifth: The intervention of Pope Francis, who made a personal appeal on behalf of Gross to both Barack Obama and Raul Castro, played a crucial role in Wednesday's developments. So did his willingness to allow the Vatican to be the site of a crucial negotiating session last month between diplomats from the United States and Cuba. His role reflects the larger global view that the half-century-long diplomatic estrangement between the United States and Cuba should come to an end for the good of all.

Sixth: President Obama promised that the United States would not relent in efforts to help the Cuban people. "We are calling on Cuba to unleash the potential of 11 million Cubans by ending unnecessary restrictions on their political, social, and economic activities." That should remain the guiding principle of American policy toward Cuba, with or without sanctions.

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Whose values did the torture program uphold?

By REKHA BASU
Des Moines Register

Rekha Basu is a columnist for the Des Moines Register. *Readers may send her email at rbasu@dmreg.com.*

Who are we?

That's one question begged by the Senate Intelligence Committee report on the CIA's torture of detainees after Sept. 11. There are other questions, but this may be the key one. And it is getting harder to answer.

"That's not who we are," President Barack Obama declared of the abusive pressure tactics used by American interrogators on detainees in foreign holding tanks, supposedly to extract information about terror plots. But some of those seem so gratuitously abhorrent, it's a stretch to even call them interrogations. Where is the interrogation component of force-feeding people their meals rectally? How much valid information could you get on the 17th day of one long, round-the-clock interrogation? What investigatory purpose is served by leaving a prisoner naked until he dies of hypothermia?

Politicians may quibble over the semantics of the practices and the politics of the report's release, just before Democrats lose control of the Senate. Apologists for the program, both from the Bush administration and the CIA, reject the word "torture." Former Vice President Dick Cheney goes so far as to call the 6,300-page report "full of c--p," even as he acknowledges no authorization was given for rectal force-feeding. Call it what you want, but when the purpose is to terrify, degrade, in some cases bring people convicted of no crime to the brink of death, and leave them emotionally and physically broken down, one can only hope those tactics would be anathema to most Americans.

Elected leaders, including Obama, Sen. Dianne Feinstein, whose committee brought out the report, and Republican Sen. John McCain, who knows torture first-hand, believe its release will show the world, as Feinstein said, "that we are in fact a just and lawful society." McCain said Americans need to know "when the values that define our nation are intentionally disregarded by our security policies."

Whose values did the program uphold--The CIA's? The Bush administration's? That's hard to answer since the report doesn't look at individual culpability. Cheney's justifications aside, the CIA did not inform the administration or get approval for some measures. On the other hand, secret legal memos sent by the Bush administration set forth a covert CIA program abroad to conduct such interrogations. Officials claimed an anti-torture treaty only applied inside the U.S. And though one of Obama's first acts in office was to ban those practices, even Obama officials reportedly considered upholding the interpretation.

So, who are we? Are there two different sets of American values to employ selectively, according to circumstances? Was the CIA satisfying itself that the ends justify the means, even though those harsh techniques were of little ultimate value in capturing Osama bin Laden? Did agents grow oblivious to the boundary lines and become dehumanized like the Abu Ghraib captors, rogue elements with enough power to abuse? Or were they opportunists like James Mitchell, the Florida psychologist who designed and implemented the program with his partner for a cool $80 million, though never schooled in the mindset or tactics of al-Qaida?

Now that this has happened, can we still claim to have those shared values in the rule of law? Can we still claim the moral authority to condemn human rights violations in Yemen or North Korea? Even though we braced for global fallout from the report, knowledge of our abhorrent interrogation practices have already contributed to terrorist recruitment efforts, even of U.S. citizens.

Americans are not unique. Like everyone, whether we do bad or good depends largely on the cues we get from our environments. Those who lack faith that the system treats everyone equally might not see a need to play by the rules. Much has been made, for instance, of the looting and rioting in the wake of a Ferguson grand jury's failure to indict a white police officer for the fatal shooting of an unarmed young black man. Without revisiting the merits of that case or justifying the behavior, there was clearly an element of nihilism that didn't spring from bad upbringings, as some people have claimed. It reflected a lack of belief that justice is for all. So hold the looters responsible but in the long run, let's make sure our police forces, prosecutors and courts model the rules of fair play.

We Americans can't change what took place in our names in secret faraway holding pens, but we can press for those responsible to be held accountable. We can vow not to let it happen again on our watch. We can use our votes and our voices to assert our common values when our leaders sometimes seem to have lost their way.

Who are we? We are the voters and the taxpayers, the office-seekers and marchers and peaceful protesters, guided by an enlightened Constitution, a belief in doing what is right and a democracy that demands our engagement.

EDITORIAL POLICY Letters to the editor must include the NAME, VILLAGE ADDRESS, and CONTACT NUMBER of the contributor. Letters that do not have these information will immediately be trashed. Contributions consisting of 500 words or less have more chances of getting published. The *Saipan Tribune* reserves the right to publish a contribution or not; the right to edit submissions for length, accuracy, and clarity; and the right to publish and distribute contributions in print, electronic, or other media formats. Submissions may be sent via snail mail to the 2nd Floor, JP Center, Beach Road, Garapan, Saipan, 96950; fax (670) 235-3740; e-mail to editor@saipantribune.com; or through our website at www.saipantribune.com.

The year in review (sort of)

By ED STEPHENS
Special to the Saipan Tribune

Visit Ed Stephens Jr. at EdStephensJr.com. His column runs every Friday.

It's nearly time to close the books on 2014. How'd you do?

Well, no matter how you did, I've got you covered today. We'll start with the good, and then slide down to the other territory.

As for the good, judging from reader correspondence from the year-to-date, many of you did well, especially those of you with business action rolling in Asia or Guam. I always enjoy hearing of the latest projects, and the latest successes, from these readers.

Just because Saipan is small and remote doesn't mean it's trivial. OK, I'll admit its cachet is, shall we say, somewhat past its prime, but it still offers ties to Asia's business scene, though I guess most of these are legacy ties that are fading with time.

Anyway, let's move along now. If you're in the group that didn't have a standout year, you're always welcome to join the delinquents in the back of the class. Today we're rolling dice for lunch money. Tomorrow, we'll play hooky and hit the beach.

And I sure spent a lot of time on my beach chair, so I'm pretty much at a loss to have much to show for 2014. The mundane details will bore you as much as they bore me, but, dang, where did the time go?

Do you ever ask yourself that? Or am I such a chronic goof-off that I've drifted into uncharted waters? Maybe so. So pardon me while I mutter to myself distractedly as I try to tally the time.

I opened the year by heeding a notion that sort of drifts in and out of my brain like a patch of advection fog. This notion was to start using the Linux operating system. I had a favorite old computer earmarked for the project. The good news is that I didn't manage to do everything wrong. The bad news is that I certainly didn't do everything right. So don't ask me where I am on this little project, I really don't know. Still, there is something very cool about Linux, so I'm going to keep chipping away at this.

As for mid-year, well, I'll admit that I lost a month. Namely, August.

It's not my fault.

But I should explain. First of all, the 99-cent Super Deluxe V.I.P. Senior Successful Boardroom Executive's 2014 Pocket Planning Calendar that I bought in January was a good buy. You caught that part about 99 cents, right? A pittance, to be sure. I was being a smart shopper.

And, like all smart shoppers, I know that the satisfaction of getting a cheap price lasts far longer than the bitterness of dealing with low quality.

Anyway, to keep the price so satisfyingly low, they apparently had to cut a few weeks out of the printing job. You've heard of a leap year? They had a leap month. Indeed, in July they leapt clear over August and landed in September. Not a bad stunt when you think about it.

At least they had the decency to make August the sacrificial month. Most V.I.P. Senior Successful Boardroom Executives are, of course, on summer vacation in Monte Carlo during that time, so they're not consulting their pocket calendars.

But August wasn't a complete loss. That month, the *Wall Street Journal* ran an article that caught my eye: "Condo-Size Tents for the Campsite," said the title. The summary: "The palatial, high-end tents that are flooding the market are hot properties for comfort-conscious campers." I think I mentioned that article in this space, but, whether I did or not, more recently my wife and I got some experience with some very large tents, and came away impressed with the realm. The WSJ looked at the upper-crust realm, some of it well over a thousand bucks, but even my lowly budget of $300 had some great options, though the actual shopping process had some pitfalls. More on that later, maybe, if anyone is interested.

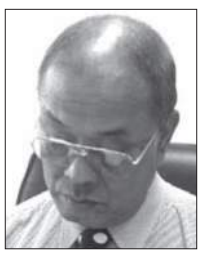
Still, I'll note for the true aficionado of relaxation, camping is great because it provides a veneer of being an "activity" while it's really a great excuse to do nothing at all. After all, even the most comfortable beach chair is good for, what, a few hours at a time, right? True, that's not too shabby, but we can do better. A 150-square foot cabin tent and a shoe box full of peanut butter sandwiches can keep you in fresh air and peace for a solid week. I'm sure it's not as compelling as the latest smartphone app, but I'll let someone else draw the distinction between relaxation and amusement.

Well, this brings me to the end the year, or close enough to it, since I'm locked into the Christmas mode and the rest of the month is a write-off. So pass the dice, please, it's time to roll for chocolate.

Looking ahead beyond '15

By JOHN S. DELROSARIO JR.
Special to the Saipan Tribune

John DelRosario Jr. is a former publisher of the Saipan Tribune *and a former secretary of the Department of Public Lands.*



In casual discussion, the focus was on vision of the NMI a decade or so from now. The viewpoints vary significantly based on a participant's perception and understanding of matters at hand. Some have skipped meaningful exchange while others were pointedly on the money.

There's the persistent economic slump that takes a downward spiral, ballooning into a vacuum in spite of figures saying otherwise. You could justify your view using either public or private sources or origin of figures.

The disconnect, however, is in our experience or intuition versus a set of data. Breaking the concept down, we ask: Did the improvement translate into money for employees' paychecks in either sector? Isn't money the very essence of this rather imperfect science we refer to as the economy? Data could be saying one thing, though there's still widespread economic dissatisfaction across the archipelago. Whatever the justification it simply fails to improve the sinking mood of perceptual buoyancy among employees.

As we search for clarity, the woefully slower than snail economic recovery is placed prominently at the forefront for verbigeration, if not regurgitation or both. Trickle-in investments have been met with toots and horns. Perhaps this view hails from the easier route of "go along and get along" confined to redundancy in perpetuity. It must be dysfunction under a "new normal."

Or is it a situational miscalculation or more the lack of alternative vision to inspire the CNMI beyond a single-legged economy? Unfortunately, it quickly slides into the Field of Dreams. This issue takes more than wild ad hoc mode of planning. Its fragility makes it imperative or mandatory that we begin with a set of blueprints, specifically how to jumpstart a very sluggish economy.

Institutional investments like the service industry could only embrace so much by way of expansion largely dependent upon increase in the number of visitors. After this, is there anything in the horizon that could significantly stir revenue generation beyond last year's $135 million? Mirrored against a huge cumulative deficit of over $4.8 billion this picture looks dim and grim. Could the NMI survive under a single and struggling economy?

There's the dearth or scarcity of visionaries and poised leaders. So the idea of putting forth sturdy and positive policies to entice anchor or lasting investments leaves it suspect at best. The pomp and circumstance, while drowning in congratulatory aura, doesn't leave much room for optimism. But let's see what the new team has to offer. It isn't a myth what must be done forthwith.

Would there be major stride building a robust economy or will it be another round of redundancy circling the bull cart? Without vision and leadership that "sees beyond the years" you could only keep your fingers crossed occasionally spewing muted long yawns. It presents a challenge wresting with the growing economic vacuum.

Gee! There's a lot on our plate, huh?

Economic vacuum (famine)

IT is tasked to hit the ground running (in January) ready to rein-in investments of magnitude to trigger economic prosperity over the next two to four years. If this doesn't happen then the stormy economic vacuum would metastasize—spread like cancer all over—forcing deeper hardship against our people. It's old problems amidst suspect hope.

Casino being policy must forcibly be implemented to begin generating revenues to prop up the local coffers. Rota has casino policy. It must implement it forthwith so it participates, significantly funneling its share of revenues into the treasury. No more breastfeeding, please! Tinian has begun. Saipan is now threatening to begin!

From the corner of my eye, I could see the settlement fund (retirement) peeking from a window at the Horiguchi building for its share of remittance in order to ensure retirees are paid 100 percent of what's due them. The NMI must fork out $27 million for this fiscal year.

For subsequent years it's $30 million in 2016; $33 million in 2017; $45 million, 2018; $44 million in 2019;, $43 million, 2020; $42 million, 2021; $41 million, 2022; $40 million, 2023; $49 million, 2024. Add $69 million of the Fund's unfunded liability plus current deficit and continuing deficit spending and $7 million in federal court decreed payment against CUC. The cumulative deficit for the next decade is nothing less than $4.8 billion!

What's the future for DB members who withdrew their money? Do we figure out a cash-balance retirement program for them or simply ignore their future? Do we keep them in government beyond 20 years just so they could continue bringing home the bacon? There's a realistic answer that weary elected officials have ignored out of exhaustion, therefore incapable of using the power of creative ideas in financing.

The more conversant participant on health issues related that the amount of money the NMI spends on medical referral expenses requires serious ocular review. He related that over $3 million is spent annually for off-island medical referral. "It's time to look inward and use these funds to upgrade the local hospital beyond ambulatory level." Agreed!

Use of alternative energy has been reduced to 20 percent, a policy decision that suffers considerably from the lack of foresight. The current system is so old we'd be lucky if we could hook solar and wind energy into the grid. Notice too that nobody wants to discuss the cost of hooking either system to the grid? Why the tiptoe? Fearful of who shoulders the cost of installation?

This ensures that even politicians can learn to trust a healthcare system they've refused to fund for several fiscal years now. Everybody gets treatment at CHC including former governors who plundered the livelihood of our people.

The NMI is definitely fiscally challenged. Well, whether we like it or not it's time we rally behind the new administration and help where we can to move issues forward with a sense of enthusiasm. Its success or failure is equally ours too!

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Policies are not plans

Your article of Dec. 17, 2014, concerning the hospital's overall correction plan appears to suggest two issues. One, the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services has set forth explicitly the policies to guide CHC's activity for full compliance with its mandates, but CHC failed in that respect. Thus, CHC is now saying that it has to change course because it is hitting the wrong targets. Or, it could be that CHC has not figured what CMS' policies are, and now it is trying to adjust what they are or define what they ought to be.

You see, policies are not plans. Rather, they are the basic framework for planning. The problem here is not with the policies because they are all laid out clearly in what CMM has been expressing all along, and this did not just crop up a few days ago. This looks more convincingly bloated in the plans and planning scheme that CHC pursued or ought to make good on. We ought to know precisely what are the plans crafted by CHC thus far addressing all the policies whether coming from the governor, the Legislature, CMS or by mere assessment of good value for patients seeking care at this public facility. Operational planning is key to the preparation for all administrative actions. We all must acknowledge that realism is a virtue in planning.

The question is more of what are the plans and how planning within CHC is producing results. This is not a policy question, and it should not have been part of the question. So, if the governor has set out a policy for CHC to pay attention and resolve all of CMS' mandates, that is the policy. CHC from that point must now produce and craft the plans to assure to the governor that it is done.

There is no point in emphasizing the importance of public policies if they are not to have meaning for government action. And, in responsible government, we expect CEOs like Esther Muna to obtain for the good of CHC the desirable policies from the authoritative source, whether it be the Legislature, the governor, CMS, or its own CHC board of directors. The objective in terms of broad public policy is where the CEO must begin the planning work. If the policy is not yet approved, then there is an impasse and the CEO cannot undertake the plans to be crafted for that purpose, hence, until plans are reviewed and consented by governing authority, including the governor, it could not be a source for administrative actions. The policies are clearly stipulated, why is it that we question what they are? Is this the issue?

Francisco R. Agulto
Kannat Tabla, Saipan

The Weather

5-Day Forecast for Saipan and Tinian

TODAY
Mostly cloudy and breezy with isolated showers. Northeast winds 15 to 25 mph.
▲88° ▼77°

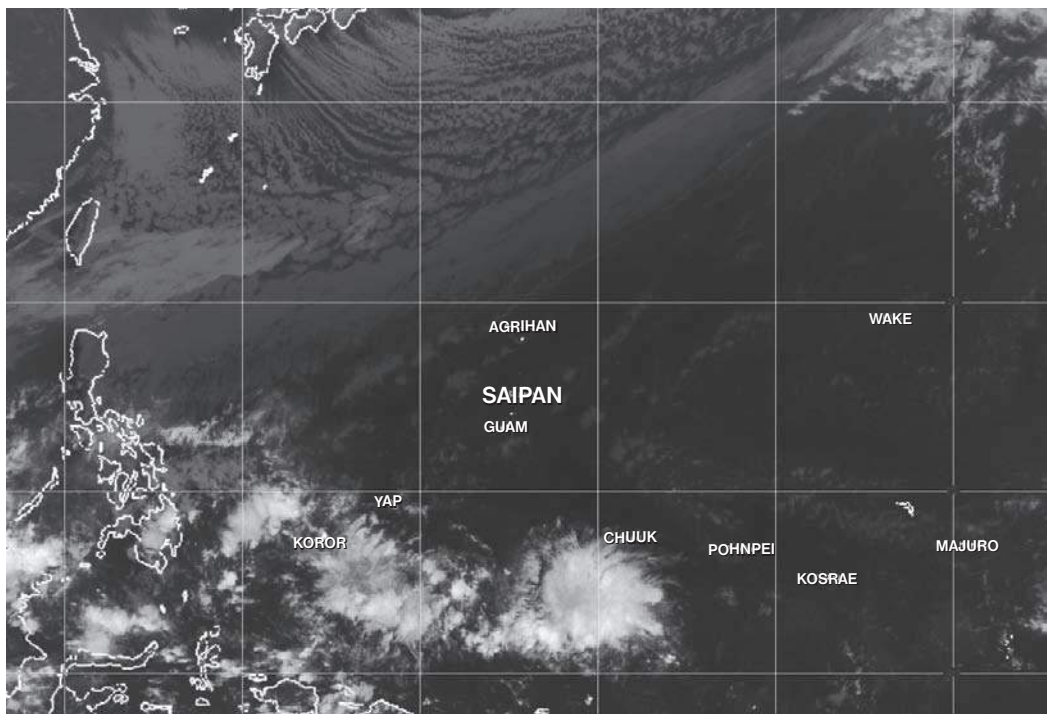
SATURDAY
Mostly cloudy and breezy with isolated showers. East winds 15 to 25 mph.
▲88° ▼77°

SUNDAY
Mostly cloudy with isolated showers.
▲87° ▼77°

MONDAY
Partly cloudy with isolated showers.
▲88° ▼77°

TUESDAY
Partly cloudy with isolated showers.
▲88° ▼77°

Yesterday's Satellite Image



PICTURE TIME: 1:00PM, THURSDAY, DECEMBER 18, 2014
Western North Pacific between equator and 25N from 130E to 180.

A cold front extends southwestward from near Minami Tori Shima through 25N154E to beyond 130E at 16N. Extensive cloudiness and patchy rain are found along and up to 350 miles northwest of this front including Iwo To island. A surface trough stretches southeastward from a weak circulation centered southwest of Koror near 3N131E to end at EQ138E. Converging surface winds north of the trough are triggering scattered showers and isolated thunderstorms over Koror but south of Yap within 150 miles of a line from 9N131E to 3N142E. A trade-wind disturbance is generating scattered showers and isolated thunderstorms southwest of Chuuk between 2N and 7N from 145E to 154E. Converging trade winds are producing scattered showers and a few thunderstorms east-southeast of Majuro within 120 miles of a line from 3N176E to 5N180E.

Satellite image and accompanying information are provided by the National Weather Service. For an updated weather forecast, visit the National Weather Service Guam homepage: www.prh.noaa.gov/guam/

Micronesia

Guam And Rota	Thundershowers	▲86	▼81
Palau	Thunderstorms	▲86	▼79
Yap	Thunderstorms	▲85	▼78
Chuuk	Thunderstorms	▲86	▼79
Pohnpei	Partly Cloudy	▲85	▼78
Kosrae	Mostly Cloudy	▲84	▼80
Majuro	Thunderstorms	▲84	▼80

Around the Globe

Auckland	Mostly Sunny	▲74	▼62
Beijing	Sunny	▲41	▼20
Hong Kong	Rain	▲57	▼54
Honolulu	Partly Cloudy	▲80	▼72
London	Windy	▲57	▼53
Los Angeles	Partly Cloudy	▲60	▼48
Manila	Mostly Cloudy	▲83	▼73
Melbourne	Partly Cloudy	▲67	▼53
Miami	Sunny	▲78	▼61
New York	Sunny	▲45	▼33
Osaka	Mostly Sunny	▲48	▼38
Paris	Cloudy	▲56	▼52
Pusan	Mostly Cloudy	▲48	▼41
Rome	Sunny	▲61	▼44
Salem	Showers	▲54	▼45
San Francisco	Partly Cloudy	▲58	▼54
Seoul	Cloudy	▲38	▼31
Tokyo	Mostly Sunny	▲48	▼38
Washington, DC	Mostly Sunny	▲45	▼33

NMI CRIME STOPPERS
Anonymous tips can now be submitted through the following:
- Call 234-7272 (PARA) on any telephone
- *11 on any IT&E cellular phone
- Log on to the internet at www.nmicrimestoppers.com

Tides

Saipan Harbor

6:15 AM	Today	High Tide:	1.6 Feet
11:20 AM	Today	Low Tide:	1.1 Feet
4:52 PM	Today	High Tide:	1.9 Feet

Sunrise/Sunset

Today	6:37 AM	5:51 PM
Saturday	6:37 AM	5:51 PM
Sunday	6:38 AM	5:52 PM
Monday	6:39 AM	5:52 PM
Tuesday	6:39 AM	5:53 PM

Moonrise/Moonset

Today	3:34 AM	3:25 PM
Saturday	4:29 AM	4:16 PM
Sunday	5:27 AM	5:11 AM
Monday	6:25 AM	6:09 PM
Tuesday	7:23 AM	7:10 PM

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FLIGHT SCHEDULE AS OF NOVEMBER 12, 2014

DEPARTURES

SAIPAN-GUAM (GUM)

UA5070	4:15am	5:05am	Daily
UA5068	8:00am	8:50am	3
UA5068	8:40am	9:30am	1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7
UA5039	2:20pm	4:00pm	6, 7 via Rota
UA5078	3:10pm	4:00pm	1, 5
UA5038	3:10pm	4:00pm	2, 4
UA5040	6:55pm	7:45pm	1, 5
UA5078	8:35pm	9:25pm	2, 3, 4, 6, 7
UA5044	10:40pm	11:30pm	1, 5

SAIPAN-ROTA (ROP)

UA5039	2:20pm	2:55pm	6, 7

ROTA (ROP)-GUAM (GUM)

UA5039	3:25pm	4:00pm	6, 7

SAIPAN-PALAU (ROR)

DL287	6:05am	1:05am+1	2, 6 via NRT

SAIPAN-NARITA (NRT)

DL287	6:05am	8:40am	1, 2, 4, 5, 6
DL297	4:20pm	7:05pm	Daily

SAIPAN-SEOUL (ICN)

OZ606	2:10am	6:00am	1
OZ606	2:40am	6:30am	2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7
OZ604	3:20pm	7:10pm	Daily
7C 3401	4:30pm	8:20pm	Daily

SAIPAN-BUSAN (PUS)

OZ608	3:10am	6:20am	4, 7

SAIPAN-SHANGHAI (PVG)

3U8648	6:10am	8:40am	1, 4, 5, 7

SAIPAN-BEIJING (PEK)

MU764A	1:30am	5:30am	4, 7
MU764	1:30am	5:30am	1, 5

SAIPAN-GUANGZHOU (CAN)

3U8646	4:30am	7:30am	2, 6

SAIPAN-MANILA (MNL)

OZ606/701	2:10am	11:15am	1 via ICN
OZ606/701	2:40am	11:15am	2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 via ICN
UA5069/PR111	2:45am	4:50pm	1, 3, 5, 6, 7 via GUM
UA5070/191	4:15am	7:20am	2, 7 via GUM
UA5070/191	4:15am	9:00am	3, 6 via GUM
UA5070/183	4:15am	8:45pm	2, 5 via GUM
UA5070/183	4:15am	9:10pm	1, 3, 4, 6, 7 via GUM
DL287/473	6:05am	9:50pm	1, 2, 4, 5, 6 via NRT
UA5071/PR111	6:40am	4:50pm	3 via GUM
UA5071/PR111	7:15am	4:50pm	1, 5, 6, 7 via GUM
UA5068/183	8:00am	9:50pm	3 via GUM
UA5068/183	8:40am	9:30pm	2, 5 via GUM
UA5068/183	8:40am	9:50pm	1, 4, 6, 7 via GUM
UA5039/183	2:20pm	9:50pm	6, 7 via Rota-GUM
UA5038/183	3:10pm	9:30pm	2 via GUM
UA5078/183	3:10pm	9:30pm	5 via GUM
UA5078/183	3:10pm	9:50pm	1 via GUM
UA5038/183	3:10pm	9:50pm	4 via GUM
OZ604/703	3:20pm	11:50pm	Daily via ICN

SAIPAN-HONG KONG (HKG)

OZ606/721	2:10am	11:50am	1 via ICN
OZ606/723	2:10am	12:50pm	1 via ICN
OZ606/721	2:40am	11:50am	2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 via ICN
OZ606/723	2:40am	12:50pm	2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 via ICN
UA5070/179	4:15am	10:35pm	1, 3, 5, 6 via GUM
UA5068/179	8:00am	10:35pm	3 via GUM
UA5068/179	8:40am	10:35pm	1, 5, 6 via GUM
UA5039/179	2:20pm	10:35pm	6 via Rota-GUM
UA5078/179	3:10pm	10:35pm	1, 5 via GUM
OZ604/749	3:20pm	10:30pm	Daily via ICN

ARRIVALS

GUAM (GUM)-SAIPAN

UA5069	2:45am	3:35am	Daily
UA5071	6:40am	7:30am	3
UA5071	7:15am	8:05am	1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7
UA5039	1:00pm	1:50pm	6, 7
UA5038	1:10pm	2:40pm	2, 4 via Rota
UA5077	1:50pm	2:40pm	1, 5
UA5041	5:35pm	6:25pm	1, 5
UA5077	7:15pm	8:05pm	2, 3, 4, 6, 7
UA5043	9:20pm	10:10pm	1, 5

GUAM (GUM)-ROTA (ROP)

UA5038	1:10pm	1:45pm	2, 4

ROTA (ROP)-SAIPAN

UA5038	2:05pm	2:40pm	2, 4

PALAU (ROR)-SAIPAN

DL298	4:30am	3:00pm	3, 7 via NRT

NARITA (NRT)-SAIPAN

DL298	10:25am	3:00pm	Daily
DL288	8:55pm	1:25am+1	1, 3, 4, 5, 7

SEOUL (ICN)-SAIPAN

OZ603	9:00am	2:20pm	Daily
7C 3402	10:10am	3:30pm	Daily
OZ605	7:40pm	1:10am+1	7
OZ605	8:10pm	1:30am+1	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6

BUSAN (PUS)-SAIPAN

OZ607	9:00pm	1:50am+1	3, 6

SHANGHAI (PVG)-SAIPAN

3U8647	10:30pm	5:50am+1	3, 4, 6, 7

BEIJING (PEK)-SAIPAN

MU763A	4:30pm	12:30am+1	3, 6
MU763	4:30pm	12:30am+1	4, 7

GUANGZHOU (CAN)-SAIPAN

3U8645	7:55pm	3:10am+1	1, 5

MANILA (MNL)-SAIPAN

OZ704/603	12:10am	2:20pm	Daily via ICN
PR110/UA5041	7:35am	6:25pm	1,5 via GUM
PR110/UA5077	7:35am	8:05pm	3, 6, 7 via GUM
PR110/UA5043	7:35am	10:10pm	1, 5 via GUM
DL172/288	9:40am	1:25am+1	1, 3, 4, 5, 7 via NRT
UA190/5077	9:55am	8:05pm	2, 7 via GUM
UA190/5077	10:00am	8:05pm	3, 6 via GUM
OZ702/605	12:30pm	1:10am+1	7 via ICN
OZ702/605	12:30pm	1:30am+1	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 via ICN
UA184/5071	10:55pm	7:30am+1	3 via GUM
UA184/5071	10:55pm	8:05am+1	1, 4, 6, 7 via GUM
UA184/5039	10:55pm	1:50pm+1	6, 7 via GUM
UA184/5038	10:55pm	2:40pm+1	4 via GUM-Rota
UA184/5077	10:55pm	2:40pm+1	1 via GUM
UA184/5041	10:55pm	6:25pm+1	1 via GUM
UA184/5077	10:55pm	8:05pm+1	3, 4, 6, 7 via GUM
UA184/5043	10:55pm	10:10pm+1	1 via GUM
UA184/5071	10:59pm	8:05am+1	2, 5 via GUM
UA184/5038	10:59pm	2:40pm+1	2 via GUM-Rota
UA184/5077	10:59pm	2:40pm+1	5 via GUM
UA184/5041	10:59pm	6:25pm+1	5 via GUM
UA184/5077	10:59pm	8:05pm+1	2 via GUM
UA184/5043	10:59pm	10:10pm+1	5 via GUM

HONG KONG (HKG)-SAIPAN

OZ746/603	12:30am	2:20pm	Daily via ICN
OZ750/603	1:10am	2:20pm	Daiily via ICN
OZ722/605	1:15pm	1:10am+1	7 via ICN
OZ724/605	2:20pm	1:10am+1	7 via ICN
OZ722/605	1:15pm	1:30am+1	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 via ICN
OZ724/605	2:20pm	1:30am+1	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 via ICN
UA180/5071	10:55pm	7:30am+1	3 via GUM
UA180/5071	10:55pm	8:05am+1	1, 5, 6 via GUM
UA180/5039	10:55pm	1:50pm+1	6 via GUM
UA180/5077	10:55pm	2:40pm+1	1, 5 via GUM-Rota
UA180/5041	10:55pm	6:25pm+1	1, 5 via GUM
UA180/5077	10:55pm	8:05pm+1	3, 6 via GUM
UA180/5043	10:55pm	10:10pm+1	1, 5 via GUM

LEGEND: Days: Monday (1), Tuesday (2), Wednesday (3), Thursday (4), Friday (5), Saturday (6) and Sunday (7); 3U: Sichuan Airlines; MU: China Eastern; UA: United Airlines; DL: Delta Airlines; OZ: Asiana; 7C: Jeju AirETD: Estimated Time of Departure; ETA: Estimated Time of Arrival. The Saipan Tribune is not responsible for any changes in the schedule.)

STAR MARIANAS AIR, INC.

TINIAN TO SAIPAN

DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY
7:00AM	7:15AM	Mon, Tue,Wed, Thu, Fri, Sat
7:30AM	7:45AM	Daily
8:30AM	8:45AM	Daily
9:30AM	9:45AM	Daily
10:30AM	10:45AM	Daily
11:30AM	11:45AM	Daily
12:30NN	12:45NN	Daily
1:30PM	1:45PM	Daily
2:30PM	2:45PM	Daily
3:30PM	3:45PM	Daily
4:30PM	4:45PM	Daily
5:30PM	5:45PM	Daily
6:30PM	6:45PM	Daily

SAIPAN TO TINIAN

DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY
7:00AM	7:15AM	Daily
8:00AM	8:15AM	Daily
9:00AM	9:15AM	Daily
10:00AM	10:15AM	Daily
11:00AM	11:15AM	Daily
12:00NN	12:15NN	Daily
1:00PM	1:15PM	Daily
2:00PM	2:15PM	Daily
3:00PM	3:15PM	Daily
4:00PM	4:15PM	Daily
5:00PM	5:15PM	Daily
6:00PM	6:15PM	Daily

SAIPAN TO ROTA

DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY
7:45AM	8:15AM	Mon, Tues,Wed, Thu, Fri, Sat
4:00PM	4:30PM	Mon, Tues,Wed, Thu, Fri, Sat

ROTA TO SAIPAN

DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY
8:30AM	9:00AM	Mon, Tues,Wed, Thu, Fri, Sat
4:45PM	5:15PM	Mon, Tues,Wed, Thu, Fri, Sat

TOHA SUPERMARKET

Holiday Sale

7:00AM-11:00 PM (MON-SUN)

MAJOR CREDIT CARDS ACCEPTED
WE ACCEPT BANK OF GUAM PACIFIC EXPRESS

WE ACCEPT FOOD STAMP

PRICES MAY CHANGE WITHOUT PRIOR NOTICE.

Calrose Rice $32.99 50lbs

King Chef Soybean Oil $30.99 5 Gal

Chicken Leg Quarter $17.99 22 lbs | $25.99 33 lbs

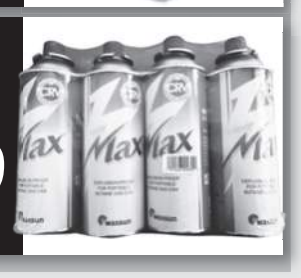
Whole Chicken $42.99 33lbs

Pork Spareribs $26.99 20lbs

Babyribs $21.99 10lbs

Ichiban $12.99 24pcs/1 case

Max Butane Gas $22.99 CASE



GROCERIES | GROCERIES | GROCERIES | GROCERIES | GROCERIES | GROCERIES | GROCERIES | GROCERIES | GROCERIES | GROCERIES | GROCERIES

Country Lime Lemonade, Tang Orange, Kool-Aid $8.99

Coffee Mate $7.99 50 OZ.

Folgers Coffee $11.99 33.3 OZ.

Del Monte Whole Kernel Corn $1.09 15 OZ.

Spam All Kinds $2.39 EA LIMIT 6

Black Label Luncheon $1.79 EA. LIMIT 6

Hormel Corned Beef $3.19 5OZ.

Ox & Palm Corned Beef Buy 6 pcs Get one Anchor Milk FREE $3.29

Kimchee Base $5.99 15.87OZ.

Campbells Chicken Noodle 99¢ 10 OZ.

Best Buy Bacon $3.49 16 OZ.

Del Monte Ketchup $4.69 64 OZ.

White Sugar $2.79 2 KG.

Fresco Vegetable Oil $9.99 1 Gal.

Dragon Vegetable Oil $9.49 1GAL.

Kikkoman Soy Sauce $4.69 1.6 L.

Tabasco $6.49 12FL.OZ.

Yours Lemon Powder $5.99 5.29OZ.

Saipan Ice Water $6.99 350ML.

FROZEN | FROZEN | FROZEN | FROZEN | FROZEN | FROZEN | FROZEN | FROZEN | FROZEN | FROZEN | FROZEN | FROZEN | FROZEN | FROZEN | FROZEN

Tilapia $1.25 per lb.

Milk Fish $1.89 per lb.

Bar S Jumbo Franks $1.35

Gusto Cooked Ham $21.99 10 lbs

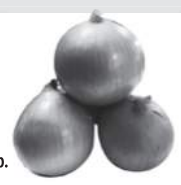
Ground Beef $15.99 5LBS.

Chamorro Sausage $4.99

Vega Shrimp $7.49 21/25

PRODUCE | PRODUCE | PRODUCE | PRODUCE | PRODUCE | PRODUCE | PRODUCE | PRODUCE

Onion 79¢ per lb.



Potato 99¢ per lb.

Garlic 99¢ per bag

U.S. X-Large Eggs $2.69 Dozen

Celo Apple $1.69 LB.

Orange $1.29 LB.

Honeydew/ Cantaloupe $1.29 per lb.

Korean Pear $2.99 per lb.

| FAMILY BAG | FAMILY BAG | FAMILY BAG |

Stewing Chicken	$6.99	Pork Chop	$11.99
Chicken Leg Qtr	$4.99	Pork Spareribs	$6.99
Chicken Nuggets	$11.99	Pork Butt Steak	$9.99
Chicken Wings	$12.99	Beef Ribeye	$15.99
Turkey Tail	$6.99	Beef Stew	$12.99
Mackerel Fish	$5.99	Beef Shank	$12.99
Mackerel Pike	$6.49	Beef Feet	$4.99
Pork Hock	$7.99	Beef Shortribs	$19.99
Pork Adobo	$9.99	Ox Tail	$15.99
Pork Bellies	$11.99	Smoked Ham Steak	$12.99

NON-FOOD | NON-FOOD | NON-FOOD | NON-FOOD | NON-FOOD | NON-FOOD | NON-FOOD | NON-FOOD | NON-FOOD | NON-FOOD | NON-FOOD

Safeguard Soap 89¢

Joy Ultra $1.49 12.5 oz $6.99 90 oz

Dawn Dishwashing Liquid $6.99 56 oz

Purex $4.29 50 OZ.

Gain Liquid $4.99 50 oz $9.99 100 oz

Gain Powder $15.99 102 Loads $18.99 120 Loads

Head & Shoulders *All Kinds* $5.49 230Z. $7.99 *Shampoo*

Bounty Paper Towel $20.99 15 Rolls

Charmin Basic Toilet Paper $7.99 12ROLLS $14.99 24ROLLS

Kordie Foam Plates $5.99 150 CT

Charmin Tissue (Regular) $7.99 24 Rolls

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Christmas is for the birds!

This holiday season, birdwatchers and nature lovers have two opportunities to learn more about our birds, and help scientists trying to conserve them. Both events are free and open to the public.

On Saturday, Dec. 27, experienced and novice birders alike are invited to participate in Saipan's Annual Christmas Bird Count. Started in 1900 by the National Audubon Society, the Christmas Bird Count is the world's longest-running citizen science project. Last year, over 70,000 volunteers counted over 66 million birds of 2,403 species across North America, the Pacific Islands, and Caribbean. The CNMI Division of Fish and Wildlife has organized local counts for over 25 years, typically tallying thousands of birds and 50-plus species.

Volunteers for the Saipan Count will meet at 6am at American Memorial Park to divide into teams for roadside and walking surveys. Teams will spread out to cover the island, finding and recording as many birds and bird species as possible. Bring binoculars if you have them, but it's okay if you don't.

At 6:30pm, Sunday, Dec. 21, local bird experts will present an overview of our native birds and their role as indicators of forest health, and give basic tips for identifying birds. This free presentation at American Memorial Park Auditorium is for novice bird and nature enthusiasts of all ages. The event is co-hosted by APASEEM, Micronesica Bird Conservation, and the CNMI Division of Fish and Wildlife.

For more information, contact Jill Liske-Clark, 783-1364 or liskeclark.cnmidfw@gmail.com, or visit http://www.cnmidfw.com/.

The CNMI Division of Fish and Wildlife is a public agency that manages our fish and wildlife resources for the benefit of this and future generations of CNMI citizens.

APASEEM, the Asia Pacific Academy of Sciences, Science Education, and Environmental Management, is the CNMI's principal advocacy-neutral nonprofit organization sponsoring conferences and presentations for the public, school groups, and professionals with interests in these fields.

Micronesica Bird Conservation is a Saipan-based nonprofit organization dedicated to the protection and preservation of the Micronesian Islands' avifauna. ***(PR)***

Saipan-da to give gifts on Christmas Day

Saipan-da will be on duty Christmas Eve and Christmas Day in Saipan.

As part of its promotions for the holiday season, the Marianas Visitors Authority will give away Saipan-da backpacks to visiting children arriving at Francisco C. Ada International Airport.

All passengers arriving on Dec. 24 and 25, 2014, will be greeted by Saipan-da and two Chamorritas in island attire. Children ages 11 and younger will receive backpacks of the character, which is well-known in Japan and loved by children from all Asian countries.

"Like Santa, Saipan-da will be busy at work on Christmas Eve, bringing smiles to children's faces," said MVA marketing manager Bruce Bateman. "He'll continue his efforts throughout Christmas Day to spread holiday cheer."

Saipan-da is a well-known, panda-like character, helping keep the destination name in front of potential visitors from Asian countries. ***(MVA)***

BIRTHDAY SHOUTOUTS

Happy birthday greetings go out to Esperanza E. Gayac, who is celebrating her 86th birthday today. May the Lord continue to shower His blessing on you. Greetings come from Merlyn and family.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Happy birthday to Juanito C. Montano Jr.! May you have more years and more success in life! Greetings come from the Montano family.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

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Save Big Right Now.
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Innovation that excites
2014 Nissan Rogue Select
Passing other cars, climbing hills, mastering the ins and outs of traffic—when you tap into the spirit of the Rogue you tap into innovative practicality and efficiency. The 2.5-liter 4-cylinder engine gets a remarkable 28 MPG (highway) and is backed by 170 horsepower and 175 lb-ft of torque. Simply put, Rogue rises up to adapt to a lifestyle of versatility and flexibility.
2014 CLEARANCE

FORD	STOCK #	Color	Discount
Fiesta S	EM225300	White	$2,500.00
~~Fiesta SE~~	~~EM22~~ SOLD	~~Blue~~	~~$2,500.00~~
Fiesta SE	EM225301	Gray	$2,500.00
~~Escape S~~	~~EUD1~~ SOLD	~~Gray~~	~~$3,000.00~~
Escape S	EUD12669	Blue	$3,000.00
Escape SE	EUB67717	Red	$3,500.00
~~Explorer EcoBoost~~	~~EGB2~~ SOLD	~~Silver~~	~~$4,000.00~~
Explorer XLT 4WD	EGB05148	Darkside	$4,000.00
F150 STX 4WD	EKE73316	Silver	$5,000.00

NISSAN	STOCK #	Color	Discount
Altima SV	EC177739	Mocha	$3,000.00
Altima SV	EC157024	White	$3,000.00
Rogue S	EC754914	Silver	$3,000.00
NV200 SV	EK696537	White	$3,000.00
~~Frontier SV~~	~~EN71~~ SOLD	~~Silver~~	~~$3,000.00~~
Frontier PRO4X	EN747027	Red	$4,000.00
Xterra PRO4X	EN807863	Red	$4,000.00
Maxima SV Sport	EC457171	Mocha	$4,000.00
~~Pathfinder Platinum~~	~~EC65~~ SOLD	~~Gray~~	~~$5,000.00~~

HONDA	STOCK #	Color	Discount
~~Civic LX~~	~~EE06553~~ SOLD	~~White~~	~~$2,500.00~~
~~Civic LX~~	~~EE00224~~ SOLD	~~Blue~~	~~$2,500.00~~
Civic LX	EE046655	Maroon	$2,500.00
Civic LX	EE065865	Silver	$2,500.00
~~Accord LX~~	~~EA26617~~ SOLD	~~Silver~~	~~$3,000.00~~
~~Accord EX~~	~~EA18773~~ SOLD	~~Silver~~	~~$3,000.00~~
~~CR-V LX~~	~~EL02629~~ SOLD	~~Blue~~	~~$3,000.00~~
~~CR-V EX~~	~~EL02846~~ SOLD	~~Mocha~~	~~$3,000.00~~
~~Odyssey EX~~	~~EB11100~~ SOLD	~~Gray~~	~~$4,000.00~~

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Coca-Cola shares holiday happiness with Thanksgiving winners

Three of the winners in Coca-Cola's "Bring Home the Holidays" promo shopped Coca-Cola 12-packs for Thanksgiving beverage and won for the first time.

Jeanette H. Borja, a Garapan resident, said she purchased three 12-packs and submitted three entries in addition to the first entry that she put in earlier. The week after Thanksgiving, while onboard a plane from Tinian, Borja said she received a call from Coca-Cola informing her that she won a $100 Shell Gas Certificate.

"I was talking quietly on the phone and I couldn't hear very well because of the noise on the plane, but my prize did register. I was so happy because this is the first time I've ever won a lottery," Borja said.

Annie T. Pickelsimer said she had been shopping for her father's 19th anniversary when she got a call from Coca-Cola letting her know that she won a McDonald's Arch Card. This is Pickelsimer's first time to win. She entered three coupons--all from her Thanksgiving purchases.

Like his fellow winners, Tony Yarobwemal of Koblerville said this is his first time to win. The winner of a McDonald's Arch Card was in a place of worship when the call informing him of his winning came. "I was in church when I got the call letting me know that I won. I had only the one entry and it made me a winner-- for the first time!" Yarobwemal said.

The other winning entries include those of Ferdinand P. Dela Torre and Mariano P. Bermudez, Subway Gift Card winners; Zeny Borja and John Gonzales, Regal Cinemas Theater Cards; Deanna Quintos, $100 Shell Gas Certificate; and Marcy Dafrow, $250 J.C. Tenorio Enterprises Shopping Certificate.

Coca-Cola will hold the second drawing today, Dec. 19, at Joeten Hafa Adai Shopping Center in Garapan from 5pm to 7pm. Nine winners will be pulled and 25 instant prizes will be given away. Everyone is invited to come. ***(PR)***

Rusty M. Loyola, left, operations manager, Coca-Cola Beverage Co. (Micronesia), Inc. joins three of the first drawing winners of Coca-Cola's "Bring Home the Holidays" promo from right, Annie T. Pickelsimer, Tony Yarobwemal, and Jeanette H. Borja during the prize presentation at the Coca-Cola offices in Chalan Laulau.
CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

VSS PLAZA'S SUNDAY BAZAAR

Variety of items, affordable prices for your holiday shopping needs

VSS Plaza's Sunday Bazaar can help your family with its holiday shopping needs with its reasonable prices and variety of items for men, women and children.

The bazaar runs from 8am to 2pm every Sunday, and according to VSS Plaza's Ben Sablan, prices are negotiable.

"Our prices are very affordable and you can ask for a discount," he said.

Among their vendors is Imelda Masongsong, a dressmaker, who offers her own prints and designs. She also sells 10K jewelry and an assortment of watches–multi-colored, elegant, or playfully designed for adults and children.

Melanie's Outlet also sets up shop on Sundays. The outlet's Tess Cabaltica sells items from the United States and Philippines. Brand names include Victoria's Secret, Old Navy, Towels, Avon. They also sell purses and wallets.

Clothes are also brought in fresh from Guam outlets. Gloria Mateo sells wallets, men's belts, dresses, men t-shirts at convenient prices for the low-key but stylish buyer.

You can show off your local pride too, Sablan said, with the special design stickers KRM General Merchandise offers that can be custom fit with your own stylings.

Sablan said you could submit your own design for print. With designs reading "Chamorro" or "Carolinian," he said these are gifts usually mailed to those in the mainland looking to show off their island pride.

KRM also sells brand new purses and wallets from Coach, Guess, and Tommy Hilfiger, he said.

The bazaar has been running for about four years, according to Sablan. It offers space for the plaza's vendors rent free, he said, and came out of a want to help out with the economy not being in top shape.

The bazaar is a must-visit stop for shopping as the Christmas holiday approaches. Its vendors are friendly and accessible, and you are sure to get a good deal.

Coca-Cola
Bring Home the
Holidays
Grand Prize
(1 winner)
Family Connections
Kindle Fire HDX
Xbox One
iPhone 6 64GB
Baby Grand Prize
(1 winner)
Staycation Bonding
Two-night, three-day hotel accommodation with meals and full water park access for two adults and two kids.
First Prize
(4 winners)
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Shopping certificate redeemable at supermarkets, hardware store, sporting goods store, athletic footwear shop.
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Share your favorite Coca-Cola products and enjoy the Season of SurPRIZES with family and friends!
Get an entry form with every Coca-Cola 12-can Fridge Pack purchase for a chance to win exciting prizes for sharing with those who matter to you the most.
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FIRST ISLAND CHRISTMAS
Welcome home, boys, to your first island Christmas. Returning from Chandler, Arizona, are the Taitano boys: Ankieton, Cody James, Joaquin Joab and Joel Vincent with parents Jack, Jr. and Nen. Photo shows them surrounding their cousin, Haven Taylor T. Magatas, at the 2014 Labor Day Softball Tournament in Portland, Oregon.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Christmas Drop supplies islands with bundles of joy

By STAFF SGT. ROBERT HICK
36TH WING PUBLIC AFFAIRS

ANDERSEN AIR FORCE BASE, Guam–The men and women from Andersen Air Force Base, Guam and Yokota Air Base, Japan, dropped its last bundle of joy on Dec. 13, to the Micronesian Islands as Operation Christmas Drop came to an end just in time for the holiday season.

What started as a small crew packing what they could in a small canister and dropping it down on a parachute during a Pacific sortie in 1952 has turned into Operation Christmas Drop, the Defense Department's longest running humanitarian mission.

During a one-week timeframe, residents from 56 islands spread out across 3 million square miles of the Pacific, received boxes filled with donations from local and international donors. This year's event set a milestone with more than 51,000 pounds of supplies donated and delivered.

"Having the opportunity to fly over the islands at 300 feet was amazing," said Brig. Gen. Andrew Toth, the 36th Wing commander. "I got to see the red flag marking the location where the box was to go and listen to the communication over the radio saying 'Santa 01 is here and Santa's helper is prepared to receive the container.'

"Watching the aircrew drop the box in the exact location and seeing the islanders swim out to get it and bring it back to shore assures me we didn't only make their day, but we made their entire year. Santa Claus was there to deliver a great gift to each and every one of them," he continued.

Throughout the missions Yokota aircrews gave airmen opportunities of a lifetime and lasting memories they will never forget.

"Being on the plane and seeing how small the islands are was eye opening," said Tech. Sgt. Magen Harger, a 36th Medical Support Squadron medical laboratory technician. "Seeing how little the islanders have access to, and how grateful they were to get the packages, was one of the most amazing things I have experienced in the Air Force. Pushing the box from the plane and watching it float down helped me realize just how much I take for granted every day."

The men and women from Andersen and Yokota came together and airdropped a total of 89 bundles of goods, each weighing approximately 500 pounds, which include Chuuk, Palau, Yap, Marshall Islands and Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands. The bundles consisted of donated toys, clothing, fishing equipment, sporting goods, food items, tools and other items that would make island life easier.

Six months before the C-130 Hercules soared into the sky to execute Operation Christmas Drop, several agencies from Andersen, Yokota and Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam, Hawaii, came together to start planning.

"I was getting calls for weeks asking me when Operation Christmas Drop would be happening," said Bruce Best, the Pacific program coordinator. "I tell them to hold on, but I know they're just excited because it's such a huge event. It couldn't happen without the Air Force and the benefits of this program are truly lifesaving. In some cases, this is literally the only chance we have all year to get much needed supplies to obscure island nations."

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(Cell No. 898-7500 Email Address: ben.sablan1994@gmail.com)
or Call 234-2585/235-9020

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MVA-RFP-15-2321
For: GARAPAN AREA TRASH COLLECTION SERVICE
Closing Date: January 9, 2015 Time: 3:00 p.m.
Submit sealed proposals to: Marianas Visitors Authority
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Interested parties may pick up the scope of work at the Marianas Visitors Authority office between 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., (closed 12:00 p.m. – 1:00 p.m.) Monday to Friday, except holidays or by visiting the MVA website at www.mymarianas.com.
/s/ Marian Aldan-Pierce
MVA Chair, Board of Directors
/s/ PERRY P. TENORIO
Managing Director

RESIDENTIAL, GOVERNMENT & BUSINESS
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IT&E would like to remind its RESIDENTIAL, GOVERNMENT & BUSINESS customers that current billing of accounts are due on or before Monday, December 22. Payments not received by close of business on December 20 will result in temporary suspension of all telephone services after 6:00PM on that day.
To prevent temporary suspension, customers are hereby advised to kindly pay their bills on or before Monday, December 22. Disputed billings must be brought to IT&E's attention in person or in writing by Monday, December 22. Customers must pay any current amount due, to avoid disconnection.
If you have questions regarding billing or services please call Customer Service at 682-4ITE (4483) or visit our Customer Service or Business Sales Center – Middle Road, Chalan Laolao.
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To avoid disconnection you may pay your IT&E bill at any location below:
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TSL Plaza – up to 6:00pm
Online payment – up to 9:00pm
PAY BY PHONE - 682-4ITE (4483)

Landfill, transfer station schedule

On Christmas Eve, Wednesday, Dec. 24, 2014, the Lower Base Transfer Station and the Marpi Landfill will be closed at 12:30pm. Also, in observance of Christmas Day, Thursday, Dec. 25, 2014, both the Lower Base Transfer Station and the Marpi Landfill will be closed all day. Regular schedule will resume Friday, Dec. 26, and Saturday, Dec. 27, 2014, from 7:30am to 11:30am and 12:30pm to 4pm. Thank you and have a safe and happy Christmas Day. From the staff and management of the Solid Waste Division. ***(PR)***

Taiwan travel agents, media impressed with NMI ocean

Taiwan travel agents and media visited Saipan and Tinian this month to promote the Northern Mariana Islands and its annual signature event Hell of the Marianas bike race.

"The group was very impressed with the colors of our ocean and our rich natural resources," said Marianas Visitors Authority marketing director Bruce Bateman. "In fact, they said we have the most beautiful ocean they've ever seen."

While on Saipan the group toured Managaha, scenic sites in the northern Marpi area, and Santa Lourdes shrine. They also filmed at Paseo de Marianas, Kinpachi Restaurant, the Fiesta Resort & Spa dinner show, and at T Galleria and I Love Saipan retail stores. Inspections were made at Kanoa Resort Saipan and Pacific Islands Club Saipan, where the group lodged.

On Tinian the group took an island tour and experienced snorkeling, kayaking, horseback riding, a dune buggy tour, and an aerial tour.

MVA

Travel agents and media reps from Taiwan visited Paseo de Marianas in Garapan with Marianas Visitors Authority managing director Perry Tenorio, in red, on Dec. 6, 2014, as part of their FAM(iliarization) tour of Saipan and Tinian.

Giant Bicycle Company travel service agent Aya Li joined the 100K race, saying the race was aptly named and one of the most difficult races she's ever participated in. The group filmed at the race finish line and the race awards banquet at Mariana Resort & Spa.

"The group was amazed at the Christmas trees and ornaments constructed by local students at Paseo de Marianas," said Bateman. "They seem to appreciate how the community works together so closely."

Participating media were Giant Travel, Police Radio Broadcasting Station, Travel Rich magazine, Travel New Age magazine, Power News on-line media, and Yangmura Studio. Representatives of Pacific Islands Club's Taiwan office also participated. Publication coverage of the islands in the participating media is slated for December 2014 and January 2015. ***(MVA)***

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Two Bedroom/With Kitchen	$89.00	$79.00
Three Bedroom/With Kitchen	$99.00	$89.00

*PROMOTIONAL RATES APPLIES TO LOCAL RESIDENTS ONLY

Promotional
CAR RENTAL RATES

	Regular	PROMO
Toyota Highlander	$100/6hrs $130/day	$80/6hrs $104/day
Toyota Camry	$50/6hrs $75/day	$40/6hrs $60/day
F.J. Cruiser	$80/6hrs $110/day	$64/6hrs $88/day
Toyota Corolla	$35/6hrs $50/day	$28/6hrs $40/day
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Mangilao
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NEXCOM Bldg #258
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Paseo de Marianas, Garapan

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Business

Sony hack may be costliest ever

NEW YORK (AP)—A U.S. official says North Korea has been linked to the unprecedented act of cyberwarfare against Sony Pictures that exposed tens of thousands of sensitive documents and escalated to threats of terrorist attacks that ultimately drove the studio to cancel all release plans for the film at the heart of the hack, "The Interview."

The attack is possibly the costliest for a U.S. company ever, said Avivah Litan, a cybersecurity analyst at research firm Gartner. "This attack went to the heart and core of Sony's business—and succeeded," she said. "We haven't seen any attack like this in the annals of U.S. breach history."

Federal investigators believe there is a connection between the Sony Pictures hack and the isolated communist nation, according to an official who spoke on condition of anonymity because the official was not authorized to openly discuss an ongoing criminal case. Earlier in the day, the besieged company cancelled the Christmas Day release of "The Interview," citing the threats of violence against movie theaters and decisions by the largest multiplex chains in North America to pull the film from its screens. Seemingly putting to rest any hope of a delayed theatrical release or a video-on-demand release, Sony Pictures later said it has "no further release plans for the film."

The cancellation was a startling blow to the Hollywood studio. The hackers, who call themselves Guardians of Peace, on Tuesday had threatened violence reminiscent of September 11th, 2001 against movie theaters showing the film. Sony cancelled a planned New York premiere and offered theaters the option of bowing out. One after the other, all the top U.S. movie chains announced they would postpone any showings of the comedy, which features a pair of journalists played by James Franco and Seth Rogen that are tasked by the CIA to assassinate North Korea leader Kim Jong Un. Sony said it then had little choice but to cancel the release.

"We are deeply saddened at this brazen effort to suppress the distribution of a movie, and in the process do damage to our company, our employees, and the American public," Sony Pictures said in a statement Wednesday. "We stand by our filmmakers and their right to free expression and are extremely disappointed by this outcome."

White House spokeswoman Bernadette Meehan said the U.S. government had no involvement in Sony's decision, adding that artists and entertainers have the right to produce and distribute whatever content they want in the U.S.

"We take very seriously any attempt to threaten or limit artists' freedom of speech or of expression," Meehan said.

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Commonwealth Utilities Corporation
Office of the Executive Director

INVITATION FOR BIDS
CUC-IFB-15-004

SECURITY GUARD SERVICES

The Commonwealth Utilities Corporation (CUC), Office of the Executive Director is soliciting competitive sealed bids from qualified firms to provide Security Guard Services for various posts at CUC, Saipan, Tinian and Rota, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

The Bid Package may be obtained from the CUC Procurement and Supply Office, 3rd Floor, Room No. 3, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building, Saipan, between 7:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. and 12:30 p.m. to 4:00 p.m., Monday through Friday, except on government observed holidays upon completion of registration and presentation of a receipt evidencing a non-refundable payment to the CUC Treasury Section, by cash, check, wire transfer or credit card in the amount of $100.00 for one package set. Prospective Bidders must pre-register with the CUC Procurement & Supply Division by December 29, 2014 to be considered.

A Pre-Bid Conference followed by a site visitation of CUC Saipan Facilities will be held on **December 30, 2014** at 10:00 a.m. (ChST) at the CUC Main Conference Room, 3rd Floor, Room No. 17, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building. A site visitation of CUC Rota Facilities will be conducted on January 2, 2015 at 10:00 a.m. (ChST). A site visitation of CUC Tinian Facilities will be conducted on January 5, 2015 at 10:00 a.m. (ChST).

Contractors must provide proof of "Indemnity Liability Insurance," specifically covering security workers assigned to CUC's compound. Coverage must be a minimum of $200,000.00. The Contractor shall agrees to and indemnify and hold CUC harmless from and against all liability, loss, damage or injury, and all cost and expenses (including attorneys' fees and costs of any suit related thereto) suffered or incurred by the Cooperative, arising from or related to Contractor's negligent performance under the contract.

Bidders shall provide a certification signed by a principal of the company stating that the company is currently in full compliance with all applicable CNMI and Federal Labor Laws and has been for the past Five (5) years. Bidders shall submit a listing of all of its employees (US & Foreign) with corresponding job titles and a certification of good standing from the CNMI Department of Labor. Failure of the company to provide the certification is grounds to reject the entire bid.

One (1) original and Five (5) hard copies must be submitted in a sealed envelope marked "CUC-IFB-15-004, Security Guard Services", to the CUC Procurement & Supply Office, 3rd Floor, Room No. 3, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building, P.O. Box 501220, Saipan, MP 96950, **no later than 10:00 AM (ChST, Saipan Time) on January 15, 2015** at which time they will be publicly opened and read aloud. Late submissions and conditional bids will not be considered.

A Bid Guarantee of fifteen (15%) percent of the total bid price must accompany the bids. The security deposit may be in cash, certified check, cashier's check, or bid bond executed by a surety company holding a certificate of authority from the United States Secretary of Treasury as an acceptable surety. A *Payment Bond* of one hundred (100%) percent and a *Performance Bond* of one hundred (100%) percent of the total bid price will be required upon the execution of the contract by the successful bidders. The Payment and Performance bond must be executed by a surety company holding a certificate of authority from the United States Secretary of Treasury as an acceptable surety. Surety Company must be authorized to do business in the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

All insurers' questions, concerns and qualification shall be handled by the Department of Commerce Office of the Insurance Commissioner (OIC). The OIC is tasked with regulating and monitoring compliance to the CNMI's Insurance Code (Title 4, Division 7). Bidders are required to submit a clearance from the OIC certifying their insurer of choice is in compliance with the CNMI's Insurance Code.

This Invitation for Bids does not commit CUC to the award of a contract or contracts, nor to pay any cost incurred in the preparation and submission of bid in anticipation of a contract. This request and the ensuing contract shall be executed pursuant to the CUC Procurement Regulations. The contractor shall be required to comply with all CNMI and applicable Federal Laws. All responses to this Invitation for Bids should take into account any and all taxes, including excise tax, which will become the obligation of the bidder, awarded a contract.

All bidders are advised that CUC assumes no responsibility in any act of omission on the part of the bidders due to lack of information or understanding of the bid requirements in the course of Contractor's preparation of a bid under the contract.

Questions or requests for clarification will be entertained only from pre-registered prospective bidders and must be submitted in writing no later than 10:00 a.m. (ChST) on **December 31, 2014** to Manny B. Sablan, Purchasing Officer, CUC Procurement & Supply Division via email address manny.sablan@cucgov.org with a copy to Vincent Pangelinan, Safety Officer, CUC Compliance & Safety Division via email address vince.pangelinan@cucgov.org.

CUC reserves the right to reject any or all bids for any reason and to waive any defects in said bid, if in its sole opinion, to do so would be in the best interest of CUC. All bids shall become the property of CUC.

ALAN W. FLETCHER
Executive Director

MANNY B. SABLAN
Purchasing Officer

Commonwealth Utilities Corporation
Office of the Executive Director

INVITATION FOR BIDS
CUC-IFB-15-008

8" ACP WATERLINE ABANDONMENT FOR SAN VICENTE SERVICE AREA EXTENSION PROJECT, SAIPAN

The Office of the Executive Director, Commonwealth Utilities Corporation (CUC) is soliciting competitive sealed bids from qualified firms for the 8" ACP Waterline Abandonment for San Vicente Service Area Extension Project, Saipan, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands. This work consists of disconnecting customer service lateral connections off the 8" ACP and reconnecting these customers on to the proper tank service area distribution main. Work will also consist of installing new gate valve assemblies and the abandonment of the 8" ACP waterline. Payment is only for the items completely installed and accepted by CUC. The duration of the contract is 190 calendar days from date of award of the contract.

This project is funded through a grant from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA). The award of this project is contingent upon receipt of approval for project award from USEPA.

Prospective Bidders for this IFB must pre-register with the CUC Procurement & Supply Division. The IFB package may be obtained from the CUC Procurement and Supply Office, 3rd Floor, Room No. 3, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building, Saipan, between 7:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. and 12:30 p.m. to 4:00 p.m., Monday through Friday, except on government observed holidays upon completion of registration and presentation of a receipt evidencing a non-refundable payment to the CUC Treasury Section, by cash, check or credit card in the amount of $200.00 for one IFB package set.

A Pre-Bid Conference followed by a site visit is scheduled on **December 31, 2014 at 10:00 AM (ChST)** at the CUC Main Conference Room, 3rd Floor, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building, Saipan.

One (1) original and Seven (7) hard copies must be submitted in a sealed envelope marked *"8" ACP Waterline Abandonment for San Vicente Service Area Extension Project, Saipan"* to the CUC Procurement & Supply Office, 3rd Floor, Room No. 3, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building, P.O. Box 501220, Saipan, MP 96950, no later than **10:00 AM (ChST) on January 20, 2015**, at which time they will be publicly opened and read aloud. Bids mailed via postal or courier service must be received on or before due date and time or post-marked before due date and time. Bid shall be submitted on the provided Bid Forms. Bidders are required to complete all Bid Forms. Bidders may supplement this form as appropriate. Bids will be required to be submitted under a condition of irrevocability for a period of 60 days after submission. Late submissions and conditional bids will not be considered.

A Bid Guarantee of fifteen (15%) percent of the total bid price must accompany the bids. The security deposit may be in cash, certified check, cashier's check, or bid bond executed by a surety company holding a certificate of authority from the United States Secretary of Treasury as an acceptable surety. *A Payment Bond* of one hundred (100%) percent and a *Performance Bond* of one hundred (100%) percent of the total bid price will be required upon the execution of the contract by the successful bidders. The Payment and Performance bond must be executed by a surety company holding a certificate of authority from the United States Secretary of Treasury as an acceptable surety. Surety Company must be authorized to do business in the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, for the protection of all persons supplying labor and material to the contractor or its subcontractors for the performance of the work provided for in the contract.

All insurers' questions, concerns and qualification shall be handled by the Department of Commerce Office of the Insurance Commissioner (OIC). The OIC is tasked with regulating and monitoring compliance to the CNMI's Insurance Code (Title 4, Division 7). *Bidders are required to submit a clearance from the OIC certifying their insurer of choice is in compliance with the CNMI's Insurance Code.*

Bidders are advised that CUC assumes no responsibility in any act of omission on the part of the bidders due to lack of information or understanding of the bid requirements in the course of Contractor's preparation of a bid under the contract. Bidders are required to comply with all CNMI and applicable Federal Laws. This bid and the ensuing contract shall be executed pursuant to the CUC Procurement Regulations. All responses to this Invitation for Bids should take into account any and all taxes, including excise tax, which will become the obligation of the bidder, awarded a contract.

This Invitation for Bids does not commit CUC to the award of a contract or contracts, nor to pay any cost incurred in the preparation and submission of bids in anticipation of a contract. The award of a contract may be contingent upon the Commonwealth Public Utilities Commission's (CPUC) approval. If CPUC approval is required, the contract will not be executed by CUC until such approval is provided.

Questions or requests for clarification will be entertained only from pre-registered bidders and must be submitted in writing no later than **10:00 AM (ChST) on January 2, 2015** to Manny B. Sablan, Jr., Purchasing Officer, Procurement & Supply Division via email address manny.sablan@cucgov.org with a copy to Yvonne Cabrera, Engineer, Water & Wastewater Division via email yvonne.cabrera@cucgov.org.

CUC reserves the right to reject any or all bids for any reason and waive any defects in said bid proposal, if in its sole opinion, to do so would be in the best interest of CUC. All bids shall become the property of CUC.

ALAN W. FLETCHER
Executive Director

MANNY B. SABLAN
Purchasing Officer

Nation

US and Cuba patch torn relations in historic accord

WASHINGTON (AP)—After a half-century of Cold War acrimony, the United States and Cuba moved on Wednesday to restore diplomatic relations—a historic shift that could revitalize the flow of money and people across the narrow waters that separate the two nations.

President Barack Obama's dramatic announcement in Washington—seconded by Cuban President Raul Castro in Havana—was accompanied by a quiet exchange of imprisoned spies and the celebratory release of American Alan Gross, a government contract worker who had been held in Cuba for five years.

The shift in U.S.-Cuba policy was the culmination of 18 months of secret talks between the longtime foes that included a series of meetings in Canada and the personal involvement of Pope Francis at the Vatican. It also marked an extraordinary undertaking by Obama without Congress' authorization as he charts the waning years of his presidency.

"These 50 years have shown that isolation has not worked," Obama declared at the White House. "It's time for a new approach."

Obama spoke as Castro was addressing his nation in Havana, where church bells rang and school teachers paused lessons to mark the news. Castro said that while the U.S. and Cuba remain at odds on many matters, "we should learn the art of living together in a civilized manner in spite of our differences."

Obama's plans for remaking U.S. relations with Cuba are sweeping: He aims to expand economic ties, open an embassy in Havana, send high-ranking U.S. officials including Secretary of State John Kerry to visit and review Cuba's designation as a state sponsor of terrorism. The U.S. also is easing restrictions on travel to Cuba, including for family visits, official government business and educational activities. But tourist travel remains banned.

Obama and Castro spoke by telephone Tuesday for nearly an hour, the first presidential-level call between their nations' leaders since the 1959 Cuban revolution and the approval of a U.S. economic embargo on the communist island that sits just 90 miles off coast of Florida. The two men are also expected to meet at a regional summit in Panama next spring.

AP

Alan Gross holds his wife Judy's hand while during a news conference at his lawyer's office in Washington, Wednesday, Dec. 17, 2014.

Obama did not rule out traveling to Cuba before his presidency ends, telling ABC News: "I don't have any current plans to visit Cuba, but let's see how things evolve."

Despite Obama's declaration, the Cuba embargo was passed by Congress, and only lawmakers can revoke it. That appears unlikely to happen soon given the largely negative response to Obama's actions from Republicans who will take full control of Capitol Hill in January.

"Relations with the Castro regime should not be revisited, let alone normalized, until the Cuban people enjoy freedom—and not one second sooner," said House Speaker John Boehner, R-Ohio. "There is no `new course' here, only another in a long line of mindless concessions to a dictatorship that brutalizes its people and schemes with our enemies."

The response from around the world was far more welcoming, particularly in Latin America, where the U.S. policy toward Cuba has been despised.

Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro called Obama's action "a gesture that was courageous and historically necessary."

The Vatican said Pope Francis "welcomed the historic decision taken by the governments of the United States of America and Cuba to establish diplomatic relations, with the aim of overcoming, in the interest of the citizens of both countries, the difficulties which have marked their recent history."

Even Hillary Rodham Clinton, who advocated for Gross' release as Obama's former secretary of state, weighed in, arguing that U.S. policy in Cuba, while well-intentioned, had only strengthened Castro. "The best way to bring change to Cuba is to expose its people

See US on Next Page

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Pope played crucial role in US-Cuba rapprochement

VATICAN CITY (AP)—The crucial role played by Pope Francis in bringing Cuba and the United States together signals that history's first Latin American pope has no qualms about putting the Holy See on the front lines of diplomacy, especially for a cause it has long championed.

The Vatican said Wednesday that Francis wrote to President Barack Obama and Cuban President Raul Castro in recent months and invited them to resolve their differences over humanitarian issues, including prisoners.

In addition, the Vatican hosted U.S. and Cuban delegations in October "and provided its good offices to facilitate a constructive dialogue on delicate matters, resulting in solutions acceptable to both parties," the Vatican said.

In his announcement, Obama referred twice to Francis and thanked him for his involvement, saying his "moral example shows us the importance of pursuing the world as it should be, rather than simply settling for the world as it is."

Indeed, Francis has shown he is willing to use his popularity and moral authority to do the unthinkable for a good cause. This past June he invited the Israeli and Palestinian presidents for a day of peace prayers at the Vatican, and before that agreed to requests to help facilitate talks between the Venezuelan government and opponents.

Such Holy See interventionism harks back to the papacy of St. John Paul II, who is credited with having helped bring down communism in his native Poland by encouraging the Solidarity movement.

John Paul in 1978 also sent an envoy to help Francis' native Argentina and Chile reach a compromise on a territorial dispute. The two countries had been on the brink of war over the Beagle Channel and its islands.

The Vatican under Emeritus Pope Benedict XVI kept a low diplomatic profile, but during his 2012 visit to Cuba, Benedict voiced the Vatican's long-standing position that it believed the U.S. embargo was unjust and only hurt the most vulnerable on the island.

"Cuba and the world need change, but this will occur only if each one is in a position to seek the truth and chooses the way of love, sowing reconciliation and fraternity," Benedict said. The remark built upon the famed call of John Paul who said in his groundbreaking 1998 visit that Cuba should "open itself up to the world, and may the world open itself up to Cuba."

U.S. Ambassador to the Holy See, Kenneth Hackett, said in a statement to The Associated Press that a senior Vatican official had met with both sides "to help bring the negotiations to a successful conclusion." He didn't name the official.

Francis' top diplomat is Vatican Secretary of State Cardinal Pietro Parolin, until last year the Vatican's ambassador to Caracas. Given his experience in the Caribbean, Parolin's role in the U.S.-Cuba rapprochement was believed to have been crucial to the deal.

The archbishop of Miami, Thomas Wenski, said that in bringing the two sides together, Francis did what popes are suppposed to do: "build bridges and promote peace."

"The church in Cuba has always opposed the embargo, arguing that it was a blunt instrument that hurt the innocent more than the guilty," Wenski said Wednesday. "And the U.S. church has supported the Catholic Church in Cuba."

Elisabetta Pique, an Argentine journalist and author of the authoritative biography "Pope Francis, Life and Revolution," said Francis had long been concerned about the effects of the U.S.-Cuba estrangement, given his position as a prominent churchman in Latin America. He frequently stressed the need for cultural engagement and dialogue.

AP

In this photo provided by Vatican newspaper L'Osservatore Romano, Pope Francis blows candles on a cake during his weekly general audience in St. Peter's Square at the Vatican, Wednesday, Dec. 17, 2014. Pope Francis got a cake, cards and a tango demonstration for his 78th birthday Wednesday, and 800 kilograms of chicken meat for the poor.

14 charged in deadly 2012 meningitis outbreak

BOSTON (AP)—Mold and bacteria were in the air and on workers' gloved fingertips. Pharmacists used expired ingredients, didn't properly sterilize them and failed to test drugs for purity before sending them to hospitals and pain clinics. Employees falsified logs to make it look as if the so-called clean rooms had been disinfected.

Federal prosecutors leveled those allegations in bringing charges Wednesday against 14 former owners or employees of a Massachusetts pharmacy in connection with a nationwide meningitis outbreak that killed 64 people.

U.S. Attorney Carmen Ortiz called it the biggest criminal case ever brought in the U.S. over contaminated medicine.

The 2012 outbreak was traced to tainted drug injections manufactured by the now-closed New England Compounding Center of Framingham.

Barry Cadden, a co-founder of the business, and Glenn Adam Chin, a supervisory pharmacist, were slapped with the most serious charges, accused in the racketeering indictment of causing the deaths of 25 patients in seven states by acting with "wanton and willful disregard" of the risks.

The other defendants were charged with such crimes as fraud and interstate sale of adulterated drugs.

Ortiz said NECC was "filthy" and failed to comply with even basic health standards, and employees knew it.

"Production and profit were prioritized over safety," she said.

More than 750 people in 20 states fell ill—about half of them with a rare fungal form of meningitis, the rest with joint or spinal infections—after getting steroid injections, mostly for back pain. Sixty-four died.

In reaction, Congress last year increased federal oversight of so-called compounding pharmacies like NECC, which custom-mix medications in bulk and supply them directly to hospitals and doctors.

Cadden's lawyer, Bruce Singal, complained that prosecutors are trying to turn a "tragic accident" into a federal crime.

"Not every accident, and not every tragedy, are caused by criminal conduct," Singal state in a statement.

Chin's lawyer, Stephen Weymouth, said he was stunned that prosecutors charged his client with second-degree murder under the racketeering law.

"He feels hugely remorseful for everything that's happened—for the injuries and the deaths—but he never intended to cause harm to anybody," Weymouth said. "It seems to be a bit of an overreach."

Lawyers for the other defendants did not immediately return calls.

ACROSS THE NATION

Charges: Stun gun, zip ties used on abducted teen

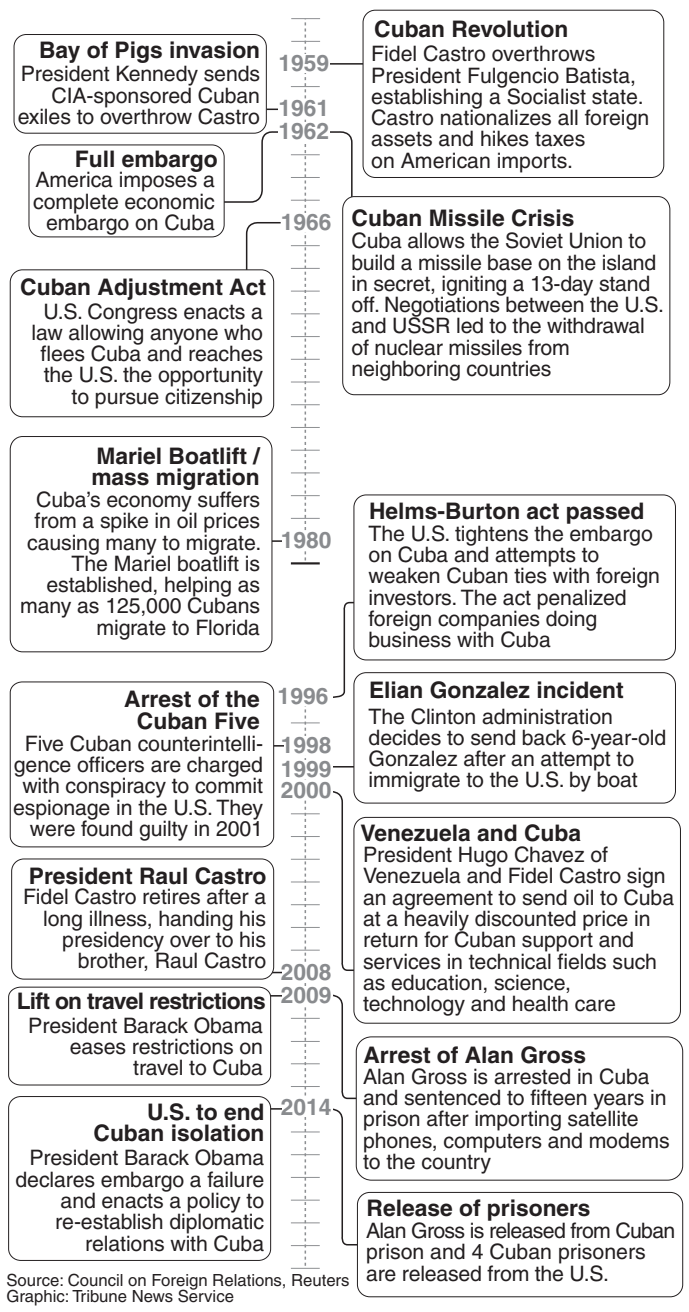
CONCORD, N.H. (AP)—A man used death threats, a stun gun, zip ties and a shock collar to control a teenage girl he's accused of kidnapping at gunpoint, imprisoning and sexually assaulting over nine months, according to indictments released Wednesday. Nathaniel Kibby was arrested in July and initially charged with kidnapping the girl Oct. 9, 2013, in the White Mountains town of Conway. Despite a massive search and widespread public outreach, there was no trace of her except for a letter she wrote to her mother that November. The girl, who turned 15 a week after she disappeared, returned just as mysteriously in July, a week before Kibby was arrested. Kibby, 34, was indicted in two counties this week on charges including kidnapping, sexual assault, robbery, criminal threatening, illegal use of a gun and illegal use of an electronic restraint device. More than 150 of the indictments were heavily blacked-out. The charges carry penalties that could effectively send Kibby to prison for life if convicted.

Guilty verdict in German exchange student's death

MISSOULA, Mont. (AP)—A Montana man who shot and killed a German exchange student caught trespassing in his garage was convicted of deliberate homicide Wednesday despite arguing that a state "castle doctrine" law allowed him to use deadly force to protect his home and family. Cheers erupted in the packed courtroom when the verdict in the case of Markus Kaarma, 30, was read. The parents of the victim, 17-year-old Diren Dede, hugged and cried. "It is very good," Dede's father, Celal Dede, said with tears in his eyes. "Long live justice." Kaarma was stoic as he was led from the courtroom. He faces a minimum penalty of 10 years in prison when he is sentenced Feb. 11. His lawyers said they plan to appeal but did not comment further after the hearing. On Thursday, Diren Dede's parents will give statements to the judge to consider when determining Kaarma's punishment. Prosecutors asked for the hearing so Celal and Gulcin Dede wouldn't have to return to Missoula for his sentencing.

New course on Cuba

President Barack Obama has enacted a historical policy to renew relations with Cuba for the first time in 54 years


Bay of Pigs invasion
President Kennedy sends CIA-sponsored Cuban exiles to overthrow Castro
1959
Cuban Revolution
Fidel Castro overthrows President Fulgencio Batista, establishing a Socialist state. Castro nationalizes all foreign assets and hikes taxes on American imports.
1961
1962
Full embargo
America imposes a complete economic embargo on Cuba
Cuban Missile Crisis
Cuba allows the Soviet Union to build a missile base on the island in secret, igniting a 13-day stand off. Negotiations between the U.S. and USSR led to the withdrawal of nuclear missiles from neighboring countries
1966
Cuban Adjustment Act
U.S. Congress enacts a law allowing anyone who flees Cuba and reaches the U.S. the opportunity to pursue citizenship
Mariel Boatlift / mass migration
Cuba's economy suffers from a spike in oil prices causing many to migrate. The Mariel boatlift is established, helping as many as 125,000 Cubans migrate to Florida
1980
Helms-Burton act passed
The U.S. tightens the embargo on Cuba and attempts to weaken Cuban ties with foreign investors. The act penalized foreign companies doing business with Cuba
1996
Arrest of the Cuban Five
Five Cuban counterintelligence officers are charged with conspiracy to commit espionage in the U.S. They were found guilty in 2001
1998
1999
2000
Elian Gonzalez incident
The Clinton administration decides to send back 6-year-old Gonzalez after an attempt to immigrate to the U.S. by boat
Venezuela and Cuba
President Hugo Chavez of Venezuela and Fidel Castro sign an agreement to send oil to Cuba at a heavily discounted price in return for Cuban support and services in technical fields such as education, science, technology and health care
President Raul Castro
Fidel Castro retires after a long illness, handing his presidency over to his brother, Raul Castro
2008
2009
Lift on travel restrictions
President Barack Obama eases restrictions on travel to Cuba
Arrest of Alan Gross
Alan Gross is arrested in Cuba and sentenced to fifteen years in prison after importing satellite phones, computers and modems to the country
U.S. to end Cuban isolation
President Barack Obama declares embargo a failure and enacts a policy to re-establish diplomatic relations with Cuba
2014
Release of prisoners
Alan Gross is released from Cuban prison and 4 Cuban prisoners are released from the U.S.

Source: Council on Foreign Relations, Reuters
Graphic: Tribune News Service

us

From Page 19

to the values, information and material comforts of the outside world," she said in a statement.

In Cuba, a sense of euphoria spread through Havana as people gathered around televisions to watch the Obama and Castro announcements.

"For the Cuban people, I think this is like a shot of oxygen, a wish come true, because with this, we have overcome our differences," said Carlos Gonzalez, a 32-year-old information technology specialist.

Half a century ago, the U.S. recognized Fidel Castro's new government soon after his rebels took power from dictator Fulgencio Batista. But before long things began to sour as Cuba deepened its relationship with the Soviet Union. In 1961 the U.S. broke diplomatic relations, and then came the failed U.S.-sponsored Bay of Pigs invasion meant to topple Castro. A year later a U.S. blockade forced removal of Soviet nuclear missiles from Cuba in a standoff that brought the world to the brink of nuclear war.

Since then, the number of Americans who see Cuba as a serious threat has declined. A 1983 CNN/Time poll found 29 percent considered Cuba a very serious threat. That dipped to 13 percent in 1994 and 12 percent in 1997.

Asia

Pakistan buries victims of school massacre

PESHAWAR, Pakistan (AP)—As they buried their children Wednesday, the families spoke of their dreams. One boy had just gotten high marks on his midterm and hoped to become a pilot. A 13-year-old wanted to become a doctor. Another kid just loved playing video games with his cousins.

At cemeteries across the Pakistani city of Peshawar, families lowered the rough wooden coffins of young boys and their teachers into the cold ground and gathered under funeral tents or at home, trying to comprehend the militant attack a day earlier on a school that killed 148 people, almost all of them young students.

The Pakistani government and military vowed a stepped up campaign aimed at rooting out militant strongholds in the country's tribal regions along the border with Afghanistan. In a sign of how deeply the attack shook Pakistan, the head of the military flew to Kabul and sought help from the Afghan government—which with Islamabad has long had a tense relationship—against militant commanders behind the attack, a Pakistani military official told The Associated Press, speaking on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to talk to the press..

In downtown Peshawar, the family of Shyer Khan, a 14-year-old student killed on Tuesday, gathered to comfort his father, who was too overwhelmed by grief to talk.

Shyer's older brother, Muneeb, was in the auditorium when gunmen burst through the doors Tuesday morning, took the stage and began shooting randomly. He fell to the floor and pretended to be dead.

"There was so much bloodshed," Muneeb said softly. "I closed my eyes and lay on the floor for an hour."

AP

Indian Muslim children pray at a madrasa, or religious school, for Tuesday's Taliban attack victims in Peshawar, in Ahmadabad, India, Wednesday, Dec. 17, 2014.

When the militants moved on to other parts of the school, he escaped through a door. His younger brother, however, was in a nearby classroom and was killed when the militants burst in and opened fire. At the gathering in the Khans' home, his family spoke of how Shyer was a fan of video games like "Call of Duty" and teasing his sisters.

In Tuesday's attack on the military-run school, the militants first set fire to a car in a nearby neighborhood, likely as a diversion, residents said. Seven gunmen then scaled the school's brick fence. They headed into the building and up the stairs to the auditorium, where many students were gathered.

They broke open the doors, took to the stage and started indiscriminately firing, said military spokesman Maj. Gen. Asim Bajwa.

The military took media on a tour of the site on Wednesday.

Blood splattered the stairs outside the auditorium. Inside, the scene was even worse.

Large pools of blood smeared the floors. A ninth-grader's notebook lay torn on the stage, next to a psychology textbook and some broken glasses. A large sign outside listing membership in various school committees appeared untouched while another wall was riddled by bullets. Bajwa said the military recovered about 100 bodies from the auditorium.

In the administration building, where Bajwa said the final gunbattle between security forces and the militants took place, the walls were covered with bullet and shrapnel marks. Streaks of blood and soot marked where some of the attackers blew themselves up. The floor was covered with shards of glass, pieces of clothing, pottery and torn flowers. Outside was a small pile of body parts.

The Pakistani Taliban, which has waged an insurrection against the government for a decade, claimed responsibility. The group says it was seeking revenge for a military assault launched in June in North Waziristan.

Pakistan has often been accused by Afghanistan of tolerating or protecting Afghan Taliban or other militants on its soil as a way to pursue its interests in its neighbor, while only trying to crack down on militants who attack Pakistani targets, like the Pakistani Taliban.

ASIAN BRIEFS

Afghan insurgents storm bank in south, killing 10

KANDAHAR, Afghanistan (AP)—Afghan insurgents stormed a bank in the country's restive southern province of Helmand on Wednesday, killing at least 10 people including three policemen, authorities said. In the attack, in the provincial capital, Lashgar Gah, five suicide bombers raided the city's branch of the New Kabul Bank. One of the attackers blew himself up at the front entrance to allow the other four in, said Omer Zawaj, the spokesman for the provincial governor. Once inside, other attackers fired at security forces, who arrived and surrounded the building, Zawaj said. Helmand police spokesman, Fareed Obaid, said three police officers were among those killed.

China indicts ex-mayor of Nanjing on graft charges

BEIJING (AP)—A former mayor of the major eastern Chinese city of Nanjing was indicted Wednesday on corruption charges amid a widening anti-graft crackdown. Ji Jianye faces charges of using his Communist Party and government positions to take massive bribes in return for favors, the state prosecutor's office said in a statement. His former position is equivalent to that of a vice minister, making him one of the highest-ranking officials to be pulled in by the anti-corruption drive launched after President Xi Jinping was installed as party chief two years ago.

Philippine communist rebels announce cease-fires

MANILA, Philippines (AP)—Philippine communist rebels on Wednesday declared cease-fire periods for the Christmas holidays and for the visit of Pope Francis next month. The Communist Party of the Philippines ordered its armed wing, the New People's Army, to halt offensives against soldiers and police on Dec. 24-26, Dec. 31-Jan. 1 and during the pope's visit on Jan. 15-19. The military earlier this week announced a month-long cease-fire with the communist rebels through to Jan. 19, but said that operations against Muslim militants will continue. The Communist Party said in a statement that the cease-fire for the pope's visit is "an opportunity for religious celebration and to raise outstanding issues such as military abuses and violations of human rights" and corruption.

World

Cubans cheer historic renewal of US relations

HAVANA (AP)—Bells tolled in celebration and teachers halted lessons midday as President Raul Castro told his country Wednesday that Cuba was restoring relations with the United States after more than a half-century of hostility.

Wearing his military uniform with its five-star insignia, the 83-year-old leader said the two countries would work to resolve their differences "without renouncing a single one of our principles."

Havana residents gathered around television sets in homes, schools and businesses to hear the historic national broadcast, which coincided with a statement by U.S. President Barack Obama in Washington. Uniformed schoolchildren burst into applause at the news.

At the University of San Geronimo in the capital's historic center, the announcement drew ringing from the bell tower. Throughout the capital, there was a sense of euphoria as word spread.

"For the Cuban people, I think this is like a shot of oxygen, a wish-come-true, because with this, we have overcome our differences," said Carlos Gonzalez, a 32-year-old IT specialist. "It is an advance that will open the road to a better future for the two countries."

Guillermo Delgado, a 72-year-old retiree, welcomed the announcement as "a victory for Cuba because it was achieved without conceding basic principles."

AP

Students and teachers celebrate after listening to a live, nationally broadcast speech by Cuba's President Raul Castro about the country's restoration of relations with the United States, at a school in Havana, Cuba, Wednesday, Dec. 17, 2014.

Yoani Sanchez, a renowned Cuban blogger critical of the government, however, said the development came with a price. Castro, she wrote, had made a "bargaining chip" of Alan Gross, the U.S. aid worker who was released from prison Wednesday while the U.S. freed three Cubans held as spies.

"In this way, the Castro regime has managed to get its way," she wrote in a blog post. "It has managed to exchange a peaceful man, embarked on the humanitarian adventure of providing Internet connectivity to a group of Cubans, for intelligence agents that caused significant damage and sorrow with their actions."

Fidel and Raul Castro led the 1959 rebellion that toppled the dictatorship of Fulgencio Batista. The U.S. initially recognized the new government but broke relations in 1961 after Cuba veered sharply to the left and nationalized U.S.-owned businesses.

As Cuba turned toward the Soviet Union, the U.S. imposed a trade embargo that has remained in place since 1962. Particularly since the collapse of the USSR in 1991, Cubans have confronted severe shortages of oil, food and consumer goods, forcing them to ration everything from beans to powdered milk.

Poll: 80 percent back Putin even as ruble falls

MOSCOW (AP)—From a Western perspective, Vladimir Putin's days as president of Russia should be numbered: The ruble has lost more than half its value, the economy is in crisis and his aggression in Ukraine has turned the country into an international pariah.

And yet most Russians see Putin not as the cause, but as the solution.

The situation as seen from a Russian point of view is starkly different from that painted in the West, and it is driven largely by state television's carefully constructed version of reality and the Kremlin's methodical dismantling of every credible political alternative.

As Putin prepares to face his public in a much-anticipated televised news conference, an Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research poll released Thursday found that about 80 percent of Russians still support him.

But it also showed that confidence in the economy is slipping. This is particularly true in Moscow, where people have become accustomed to imported goods and foreign travel, now once again off-limits for many because of the fall of the ruble and Western sanctions over Ukraine.

The poll was conducted between Nov. 22 and Dec. 7, when the ruble was steadily declining. But this week's catastrophic collapse is likely to have a much greater effect on consumer prices and the standard of living.

For Putin, the question is whether he will be able to convince Russians to tighten their belts, and not just for a few months but possibly for years to come.

"The Russian people have a sense that they are under sanctions, they are a fortress under siege," said Maria Lipman, an independent analyst. "This kind of mentality is disseminated consistently and steadily by Russian television: Who else is there to rely on except Putin? Putin is seen as the savior of the nation, and I think he sees himself in this fashion."

Putin will address his countrymen's concerns over the course of three or four hours at Thursday's news conference. He seems all but certain to send the message that he is in charge and all is fine.

An advertisement for the news conference running on state television shows Putin surrounded by Sochi Olympic athletes, petting a baby tiger and greeting cosmonauts. "We are absolutely capable of doing everything ourselves," he promises the audience.

How Russians view Putin is associated with how they get their news, the poll showed. Those who identified state television as their main source of news are more likely to approve of Putin (84 percent) than those who have other sources (73 percent), while those who tune into the news often also have a more favorable opinion of him.

After becoming president in 2000, Putin benefited from high prices for oil, the mainstay of Russia's economy. In the past decade, Russians saw their living standards rise faster than at any other point in modern history, transforming many average citizens into car owners and globetrotters for the first time ever.

The suppression of opposition politicians and independent media, widely criticized by outside observers, was tacitly accepted by many as a compromise worth making for economic stability after the roller coaster years of the 1990s.

Off The Wall

Rings given to Salvation Army fetch $21K for toys

BOSTON (AP)—Not even J.R.R. Tolkien could dream up rings as precious as these.

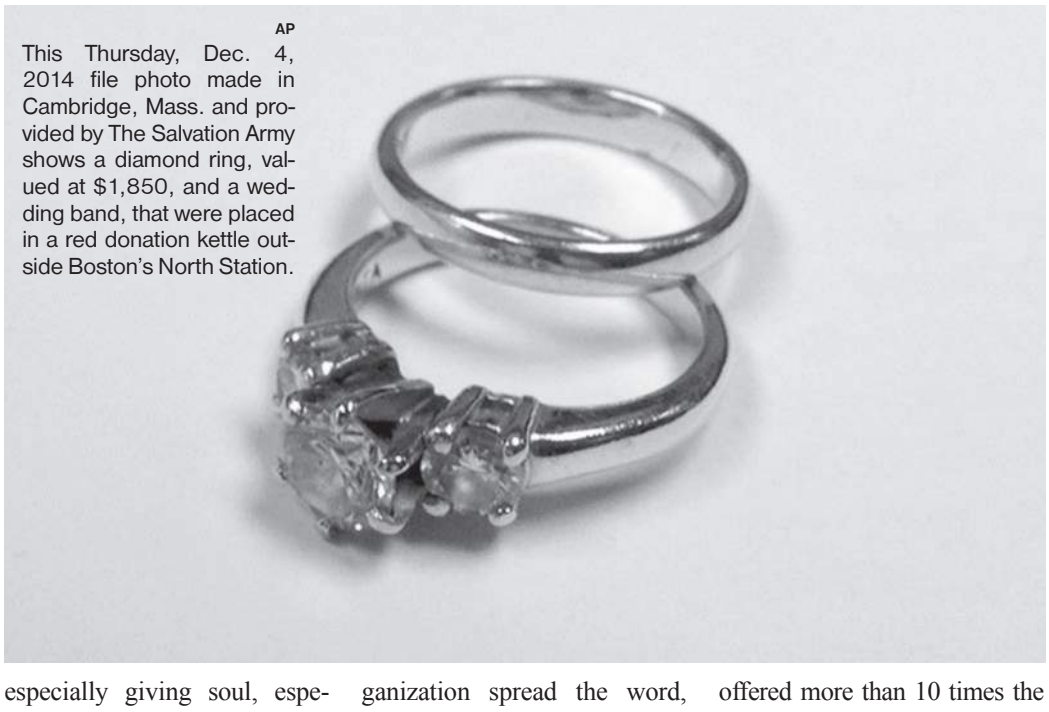
A former Salvation Army bell ringer is paying $21,000 for a diamond engagement ring and wedding band that a widow placed inside a red donation kettle in Boston. A note accompanying the rings asked that the jewelry be sold and the proceeds used to buy toys for poor children.

This heartwarming Christmas story gets even better: The anonymous woman redeeming the rings is also a widow, and she wants to return them to the woman who originally donated them.

"I want to be involved in this because it's about the spirit of Christmas, the spirit of giving," the buyer told the Salvation Army, which announced the rings' sale Monday. "My wish is that the rings can be returned to this woman who gave them up in memory of her husband for the sake of children at Christmas."

The fellowship of these rings began earlier this month, when the charity emptied one of its trademark kettles outside Boston's North Station and found the rings wrapped inside a letter.

The widow who gave them recalled her late husband as an especially giving soul, especially during the holidays, and said she was donating her rings in his memory.



AP

This Thursday, Dec. 4, 2014 file photo made in Cambridge, Mass. and provided by The Salvation Army shows a diamond ring, valued at $1,850, and a wedding band, that were placed in a red donation kettle outside Boston's North Station.

"I'm hoping there's someone out there who made lots of money this year and will buy the ring for 10 times its worth. After all, there's no price on love or the sentimental value of this ring. But money will help the kids," her note read.

Massachusetts Salvation Army Major David Davis said the diamond ring alone was valued at $1,850. In keeping with the donor's wish, the organization spread the word, and Davis said the rings got multiple offers.

"One expression of love has inspired another grand gesture to help those in need during the holiday season," he said. "Because of these two amazing individuals, our Salvation Army officers, staff and individuals will be able to extend our outreach to the many families and children in need. We are dedicated to fulfilling the sentiment behind these two heartfelt donations."

In the end, the winning bidder offered more than 10 times the rings' worth. The woman, identified only as a former Salvation Army volunteer, told the charity she was inspired in part because she, too, lost a beloved husband.

"I miss him dearly, but my husband would be happy that I am doing this," she said.

The Salvation Army doesn't know who the original donor is but hopes she'll come forward, spokesman Drew Forster said.

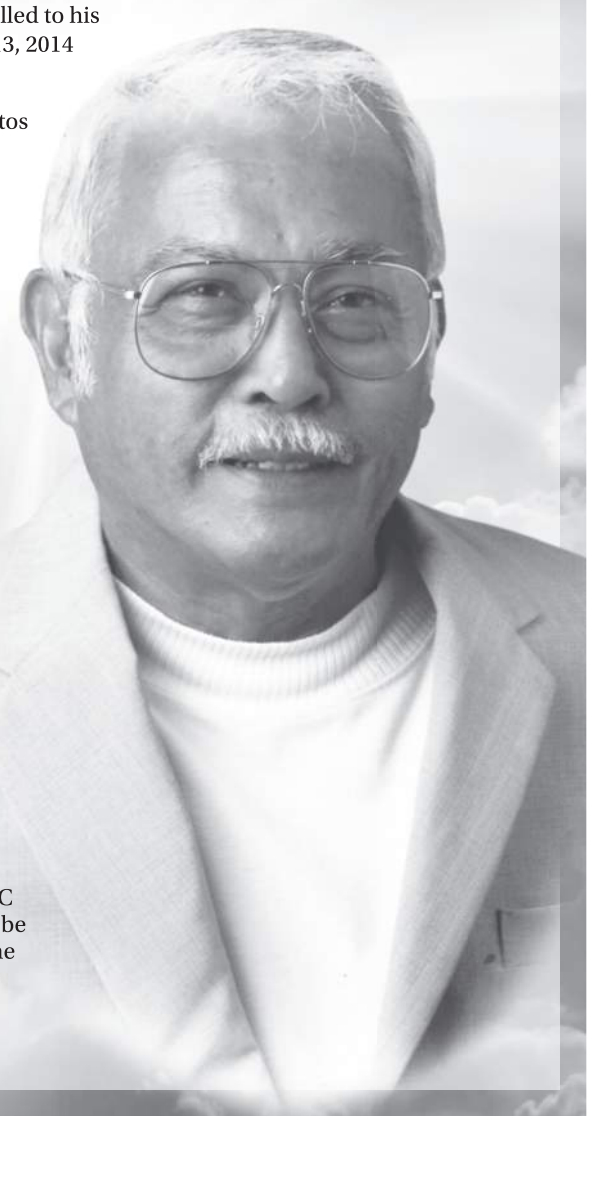
"We're hoping this incredibly generous person reaches out so we can set up a very quiet meeting" to return the rings, he said.

DEATH AND FUNERAL ANNOUNCEMENT

†VICENTE CAMACHO

*Affectionately known as "**Ben Tinang**"*

Born to life on June 28, 1941 and was called to his eternal rest on Saturday, December 13, 2014



In His New Life, Vicente Now Joins His:
Parents: †Jose Torres, †Francisca Campos Camacho Torres and †Pedro Santos
Parents In Law: †Jose Villagomez Duenas and †Nieves Palacios Duenas
Brothers, Sisters & Spouses: †Mariano C. Torres (†Antonia) , †Dionicio C. Torres, †Ninfa T. Attao (†Pedro) , †Esperanza T. Babauta (†Vicente) & †Nicolas Santos (†Delgadina & †Rita)
Brothers & Sisters In Law: †Pedro P. Duenas (†Lucia), Antonio P. Duenas (†Dolores), †Dolores D. Babauta (†Dionicio), †Jose P. Duenas (†Rufina), †Trinidad C. Duenas, †Antonia D. Dela Rosa, †Joseph M. Wineinger

The Love and Blessing of his memory will line in the hearts of his:
Wife: Martina Duenas Camacho

Children:
Frances C./Manuel R. Muna *(Gerard Borja [Cassandra], Peter C./Maryley Demapan [Nataley], Joseph Vincent)*
Joseph D./Jackie T. Camacho *(Kaisha, Joseph T./Jasmine Camacho [Kanai'i],Pedriane)*
Julie D. Camacho/Henry P. Castro *(Kenneth Camacho, Ann Margaret Diaz/Ike Agulto [Iyannah], Norbert Diaz, Jr.)*
Leonard Camacho/Esther Milne *(Erica/Brian[Mekhi Xavier], Ernie[Kamille]), Leandra/Adrian[Adriel], Lianna, Arianna, Penny Mae, Leonard, Jr., Candy Neveah)*
Vincent Camacho/Catherine T. Teregeyo

Brother and Spouse: Leonard C./Eula Sablan
Brother & Sister-in-laws: Merced T. Torres, Ignacio P. Duenas, Antonio Dela Rosa, Maria D. Wineinger

He will be missed by numerous cousins, nieces, nephews and friends.

On Saturday, December 20, 2014, his remains will be escorted from CHC Morgue to Mt. Carmel Cathedral at 7:30am. Mass of Christian Burial will be celebrated at 11:00am followed immediately by Interment Services at the Chalan Kanoa Cemetery.

Un Dangkulu Na Si Yu'us Ma'ase

GINEN I FAMILIA

OFFBEAT BRIEFS

Massachusetts baby born at 10:11, 12-13-14

WORCESTER, Mass. (AP)—A Massachusetts couple is celebrating the birth of their daughter with a numerically unusual birth time and date. Clare Elizabeth Keane was born at 10:11 a.m. Saturday—making her birth time and date 10:11, 12-13-14. Parents Jennie and Matthew Keane, of Uxbridge, hadn't even thought of the possible numerical feat until a nurse at UMass Memorial Medical Center in Worcester mentioned the combination. When Jennie Keane started having contractions Friday night the time and date became part of the plan. Matthew Keane tells The Telegram & Gazette "we were laughing the whole time that she was pretty close." Jennie Keane says she's just glad the 7-pound, 2-ounce Clare wasn't 8 pounds, 9 ounces.

Among change, gift of jewels for Salvation Army

DORAL, Fla. (AP)—In one of its famous red kettles in South Florida, the Salvation Army has received a gift worth more than a little bit of change: an emerald and diamond necklace. On Tuesday afternoon, the agency received a call directing bell ringers to check a kettle in Doral, a Miami suburb. There, a worker found the necklace and a note telling the group to keep up the good work. The Miami Herald reports that it's the fifth consecutive year the organization's Miami-Dade chapter has received an unusual gift around the holidays. It always comes with a similar note and a phone call from a woman. Judith Mori of the Salvation Army says the necklace is appraised at $1,340. Previously, the gifts have been a gold nugget, $1,000 and two diamond rings.

Goodwill workers find cremated remains in donation

LAFAYETTE, Ind. (AP)—Two boxes of cremated human remains mistakenly included among household items donated to an Indiana Goodwill have been reunited with the deceased's next of kin, police said. Goodwill employees sorting through donated items Friday found two small, white boxes filled with remains, Lafayette police Sgt. Grant Snyder told the Journal & Courier. A merchandise sorter found the boxes inside velvet pouches inside a larger box, store manager Paula Strong said. "When she pulled them out of the red velvet bags, that is when she realized that they were from a crematory and what they were," Strong said. Each box was marked with a date and name, which police used to reunite the remains with survivors.

Johns Hopkins mistakenly welcomes wrong students

BALTIMORE (AP)—Johns Hopkins University mistakenly sent nearly 300 applicants welcome messages when they were actually rejected or deferred, and now the school has issued an apology. University officials told The Washington Post it was a mistake of human error. Vice Provost David Phillips said a contractor who works with Johns Hopkins on electronic communications pulled a wrong list of emails. "We apologize to the students affected and to their families," Phillips said. "Admissions decision days are stressful enough. We very much regret having added to the disappointment felt by a group of very capable and hardworking students."

Mystery man hands out $100 bills in Massachusetts

BARNSTABLE, Mass. (AP)—A generous mystery man has made the holiday season a little brighter for employees of two Massachusetts coffee shops. A man wearing a cowboy hat walked into Marylou's in Hyannis on Saturday and handed the worker behind the counter 15 envelopes, each containing a crisp $100 bill. Manager Victoria Grandy tells the Cape Cod Times "MERRY CHRISTMAS" was printed in red on the front of each envelope. Workers didn't recognize the man as a regular, but one employee said he resembled Santa Claus. A man, believed to be the same person, but this time wearing a ball cap, on Monday handed over eight envelopes containing $100 bills to the workers at the Dunkin' Donuts at the Cape Cod Mall.

Dognapped! 13 puppies snatched from pet store

MANCHESTER, N.H. (AP)—Police in New Hampshire say they have collared the humans responsible for snatching 13 puppies from a New Hampshire pet store in a smash-and-grab dognapping. A passer-by noticed a broken window at Bill's Pet and Aquarium in Manchester on Tuesday morning and called police. Sgt. Brian O'Keefe tell WMUR-TV that an officer sent to investigate spotted several people nearby, including one who was carrying a puppy. Four teens were arrested after a foot chase. The puppies were soon found at a home. The pooches, worth over $5,000, included chocolate Labrador retrievers, cockapoos, a Shar-Pei, Papillion and a cocker spaniel.

Science & Technology

On Kickstarter, everyone wants to be 'Staff Pick'

NEW YORK (AP)—Want your project to get selected as a "Staff Pick" on crowdfunding site Kickstarter?

Good luck with that.

Entrepreneurs and other users have been seeking the secret to getting their projects selected as a "Staff Pick"—a designation that one of Kickstarter's 98 employees can give a project based on his or her personal tastes.

Charming a staffer has perks. Staff Picks can get prime placement on the website, be promoted to Kickstarter's 2 million followers on Facebook and Twitter, or appear in Kickstarter's "Projects We Love" email, which reaches more than 4 million inboxes every week. That promotion can increase donations. Users get in on the promotional activity by updating their pages to add a bright green badge or banner they create themselves, even though Kickstarter discourages the practice.

Kickstarter's employees can also donate their own cash to a project. And earlier this year, Kickstarter started using company money to give cash to projects it favors.

That has users scrambling to figure how to get picked.

AP

In this Oct. 9, 2014 photo, Shelley Harper, from Woodinville, Wash., works at her ConQuest Adventure Journal booth during the first day of New York Comic Con, at the Javits Convention Center.

Shelley Harper scoured Google, read blog posts and studied past Staff Picks before launching a Kickstarter campaign for her business, ConQuest Adventure Journal, which makes journals for fans of comic book convention Comic-Con, to store autographs, photos and other mementos. Her research turned up no answers.

An email sent to Kickstarter went unanswered. Then, weeks after her campaign launched, it was selected as a Staff Pick. She still has no idea why.

"It's like this magical thing and nobody knows how it happens," says Harper, who raised nearly $12,000 in July to help pay for the printing of more ConQuest journals.

Kickstarter spokesman Justin Kazmark did not make other employees available to be interviewed, but says workers spend a big part of their day keeping up with projects that are posted on the site and pick ones that have a good video, give colorful updates about the project or have an imaginative idea.

The company says there is no science to how its employees choose their favorite projects. Users find out they were selected in an email: "Someone on the Kickstarter team loves your project," it says.

BlackBerry launches Classic in last-ditch effort

AP

BlackBerry's new BlackBerry Classic phone is displayed during a news conference, Wednesday, Dec. 17, 2014, in New York.

NEW YORK (AP)—BlackBerry is returning to its roots with a new phone that features a traditional keyboard at a time when rival Apple and Android phones—and most smartphone customers—have embraced touch screens.

With the Classic, BlackBerry is courting its core customer, the business user. The physical keyboard is something traditional BlackBerry users prefer because they find it easier than touch screens to type with. The company is also emphasizing battery life and security.

"A lot of people say the Classic is aiming for loyal customers. And that is true," CEO John Chen said at the gadget's launch event, tellingly held in New York City's Financial District. But he also invited people who haven't used a BlackBerry "especially people who are young," to try the BlackBerry Classic.

Pioneered in 1999 with the launch of the RIM 950, BlackBerry changed the culture by allowing on-the-go business people to access email wirelessly. Then came a new generation of competing smartphones, and suddenly the BlackBerry looked ancient. Apple showed that phones can handle much more than email and phone calls. Blackberry was late in overhauling its operating system to compete.

BlackBerry now holds a small fraction of the U.S. smartphone market after commanding a nearly 50 percent share as recently as 2009.

TECH Q&A

Nexus 7 tablet choked on Google's Lollipop

By STEVE ALEXANDER
STAR TRIBUNE (MINNEAPOLIS)

Q: I recently upgraded my two-year-old Asus Nexus 7 tablet computer to version 5 of the Android operating system. About the same time, I bought a Verizon Jetpack, a cellular device that creates a Wi-Fi hot spot. My tablet now operates very slowly, but I don't think the Jetpack is to blame because my phone and laptop can connect to it. What's the problem?

A: Your slowdown problem is caused by upgrading your older Asus tablet computer to the Android 5.0, the operating system also known as Lollipop. Many users of Nexus 7 devices they bought in 2012 have voiced similar complaints after performing the same upgrade. In addition, some of the tablets have suffered camera or texting problems (see tinyurl.com/kajnb6d).

Some experts say tablet performance can be improved by clearing the tablet's cache memory (for instructions, see tinyurl.com/lxlq37c.) But some users say that doesn't solve the slowdown problem (see tinyurl.com/ml84qab). Google is expected to release a software fix for older Nexus tablets like yours, but it's unclear how soon that will happen (see tinyurl.com/klbncd2).

Q: I'm having problems downloading updates for programs on my 64-bit Windows 7 PC, using the Mozilla Firefox and Google Chrome browsers. When updating programs such as Java and Ad-Aware, I can't download the last 1 percent of the software. What's wrong?

A: I suspect you are using the wrong version of Java, the software that allows your Web browser to interact with Internet websites. Because you've got a 64-bit version of Windows, it would be natural to think you should use the 64-bit version of Java. But Oracle Corp., which owns the Java software, says that's not a good idea because some websites don't work well with 64-bit Web browsers. As a result, Oracle recommends that consumers avoid using both 64-bit Web browsers and Oracle's 64-bit version of Java that was written for them.

To solve your problem, make sure you're using the 32-bit version of Google's Chrome browser (learn how to tell at tinyurl.com/kyow2my) or Microsoft's Internet Explorer browser (in Windows 7, you automatically use the 32-bit browser unless you opt to use the 64-bit version.) So far, Firefox comes only in a 32-bit version, although a 64-bit version is in the works.

Then go to the Java page (tinyurl.com/mc49ks) and download the 32-bit version.

Feedback: Donna Frost of Meredith, N.H., shared this fix for a Wi-Fi connection that often failed. "I had my wireless router too close to my Internet service provider's cable modem, causing interference," she wrote. "As soon as I moved the boxes a few feet apart, the problem went away."

In Loving Memory of

†Susana Taitano Castro

"Susanan Gregorion Kan"

of Afetña was called to her eternal rest on December 16, 2014
at the age of 75 years.

In her new life, she joins her:
Husband: †Gregorio Igibara Castro
Daughter: †Danita T. Castro
Parents: †Ramon Quitano Taitano and †Nieves Sablan Taitano
Brothers: †Isidro, †Thomas, †Vicente, †Juan and †Jose Taitano
Sisters: †Bernadita, †Soledad and †Elena Taitano
Father and Mother In Law: †Juan Cabrera Castro and †Esperanza Guevara Castro

Her memory will live on in the hearts of her:
Children: Cynthia C./Antonio P. Mafnas, Elizabeth T. Castro/†Joaquin S. Deleon Guerrero, Gregory F./Gloria S. Castro, Diana C. /†William S. Pangelinan, Berthillia C./Robert S. Dunn, Patricia C./Francisco C. Magofna, Evelyn C./William M. Fleming, John C./Victoria B. Mafnas, Vincent T./Hilma P. Castro

Brothers/Sisters and In Laws: Antonia T. Santos/†Eddie Mesa, Maria T. Salinas/†Patrick Salinas, Rosa T. Herrera, †Juan Taitano/Esperanza Taitano, Jesus/Bernadita Taitano, Herman/Donata Taitano, †Jose S./Nila L. Taitano, †Herman I./Maria S. Castro, †Vicente I./Theresa B. Castro, Marcelino I. Castro, Candido I./Veminda Castro, Vicenta C./Gary Wambolt, †Ana C./†Noberto Javier, Dolores G. Castro, Magdelena C./Fred F. Camacho, Juan I./Ivy & (†Ellen) Castro, Antonio I./Menelia S. Castro, Maria C./Pedro S. Tudela, †Margarita C./Francisco Borja, Jose I. Castro

She is additionally survived by numerous grandchildren, great-grandchildren, nieces, nephews, godchildren, relatives and friends.

Nightly mass is being held at San Antonio Church at 6pm immediately followed by rosary. On Sunday December 21st mass will be held at 9am immediately followed by rosary. Final mass will be held on Wednesday, December 24th at 5am. Wake and funeral services will be held on Monday, December 22, 2014 at San Antonio Church. Last respects and viewing will begin at approximately 7:45am followed by Mass for Christian Burial at 11am. Burial will immediately follow at Mt. Carmel Cemetery.

Thank you and Si Yu'us Ma'ase.

The Family

Life & Style

How Kim Jong Un became the target of 'The Interview'

NEW YORK (AP)—A few weeks ago, when a freshly stoned Seth Rogen sat down for a lunch interview about "The Interview," the likelihood of trouble seemed remote.

"You're always hoping nothing horrible is going to happen, obviously," said Rogen. "If something horrible happened and they were like, 'It's inappropriate to release this movie now,' we'd ultimately go, 'Yeah, we got to make it and got paid in advance.'"

Unfortunately, Rogen's chuckling hypothetical has come to pass. After a devastating hacking attack on Sony Pictures and threats of terrorist attacks when "The Interview" was set to open in theaters on Christmas Day, Sony canceled the release of Rogen's film on Wednesday. The real-world geopolitics that initially served as fodder for parody in "The Interview" have upended one of Hollywood's biggest holiday releases.

"The Interview," which depicts a hapless assassination attempt on North Korean leader Kim Jong Un, enraged a country extremely sensitive to portrayals of its dictator and the film has led to one of the worst cyber-hacking crimes in corporate history.

A U.S. official told The Associated Press on Wednesday that federal investigators have now connected North Korea to the hacks that have roiled Sony Pictures and aired its dirty laundry in huge leaks of private emails.

The still unraveling effects have put an uneasy spotlight on a goofy, R-rated comedy, with some questioning Sony's decision to make a film that was sure to provoke an isolated nation. The filmmakers—who declined requests to add to their earlier, pre-hacking comments to the AP—describe striving to push the limits of what a major studio would support.

AP

This photo provided by Columbia Pictures - Sony shows, James Franco, center, as Dave, and Seth Rogen, right, as Aaron, in Columbia Pictures' "The Interview."

"When it comes to the movies we've made at Sony, they've just got (guts)," said Goldberg by phone before the hacking leaks. "They just all agreed to it really quickly, much to our luck. And before anyone knew it, we were filming the movie and it's too late."

Rogen and Goldberg initially conceived of the film as about North Korea's former leader, Kim Jong Il, who died in late 2011. Goldberg says they did "a big old search" of the world's dictators, settling on North Korea because its bizarreness, he said, was rife for comedy.

There are precedents. In "The Great Dictator" (1940), Charlie Chaplin played a version of Adolf Hitler, dubbed Adenoid Hynkel. Rogen and Goldberg could have similarly fictionalized their central character. But the two, weaned on quasi-real comedies like "The Larry Sanders Show" and greatly influenced by their spell as writers on Sacha Baron Cohen's "Da Ali Show," wanted to keep the film grounded in reality. In their last movie, the apocalypse comedy hit "This Is the End," its stars played variations of themselves.

"When you're on that set with James Franco playing James Franco and Mike Cera playing Mike Cera, you're like: 'Well why would we have, like, King Jong Jon, a fake dictator of East Korea, when we could just do something real?'" said Goldberg.

"We were always like, 'It's more exciting than making a regular movie,'" said Rogen. "It adds a link to the real world, which is exciting."

After seeing a Mike Wallace interview on "60 Minutes," Rogen and Goldberg came up with the idea of centering the movie around an entertainment TV show host (James Franco) landing an interview with Kim and being tasked by the CIA to kill him. Though the movie ultimately ends in a fiery death for the Korean leader, the film equally satirizes American culture. Franco's vapid host and Kim pal around together through much of the movie.

"I'm sure back (when they were writing it) some of the stuff seemed absurd, like this could never happen—a pop culture figure from America going to hang out with the head of North Korea," said Franco by phone. "But since we've made it, Dennis Rodman went over there. Reality is matching the craziness of the script."

With only one box-office slip in Rogen and Goldberg's history (2011's "The Green Hornet") and coming off the success of "This Is the End" ($101 million domestically), "The Interview" was financially a good bet for Sony. Costing a relatively modest $40 million, the film was expected to make around $30 million in its opening weekend.

But the bigger risk for Sony was always inflaming an unpredictable regime. Leaked emails revealed that Kazuo Hirai, chief executive of Sony in Japan, asked for the film's climatic fatal explosion—including an image of Kim's face melting—to be toned down. Other emails reveal Sony Pictures chief Michael Lynton moving to distance Sony's name from the film in promotional materials.

An email from Rogen to Sony Pictures co-chairman Amy Pascal showed him arguing against too much sensitivity: "This is now a story of Americans changing their movie to make North Koreans happy," he wrote.

Soon after the release of the trailer for "The Interview" in June, the North Korean Foreign Ministry responded with a statement calling the film "an act of war" and declaring its maker a "gangster filmmaker." Rogen compared the response to the closest a comedian can come to winning an Oscar.

"We did a lot of high-fiving," said Rogen, who noted they were quickly pulled into a meeting with concerned studio executives. "When an entire country—a nuclear power—condemns you and your movie, it's really exciting."

As alterations were made to the "The Interview" (emails show back-and-forth through early October on the explosion scene), its Oct. 10 release date was pushed to December. Test screening suggested the film was playing well. Little had been heard from North Korea since the summer.

"Going into the testing process, there was an anxiety: What if it is just offensive? What if we've done something that's just deemed inappropriate?" said Goldberg. "And every preview went awesome."

"At its core, it's just a movie," said Rogen. "And I mean that in the very best way."

Rogen said they were "90 percent, 99 percent sure" that North Korea would only respond with bluster. But some of his comments in November now seem ominous.

"I don't even know if they've seen it yet," he said. "We heard they might have been able to hack into one of our servers and actually watch the movie."

REGAL CINEMAS
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THE INTERVIEW [CC,DV] (R)
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Sun. - Wed.(215 PM 445 PM) 730 PM
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Thu.(1230 PM 345 PM) 1015 PM
HOBBIT: THE BATTLE OF THE FIVE ARMIES 3D [CC,DV] (PG-13)
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Mon. - Thu.700 PM
EXODUS: GODS AND KINGS [CC,DV] (PG-13)
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EXODUS: GODS AND KINGS 3D [CC,DV] (PG-13)
Fri. - Thu.(355 PM) 710 PM
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Wed.(110 PM 415 PM)
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Sun. - Wed.(425 PM)
BIG HERO 6 3D [CC,DV] (PG)
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Wed.(135 PM)
Times For 12/19 - 12/25 www.REGmovies.com

Canadian chain postpones 'The Interview' showings

TORONTO (AP)—Canada's dominant theater chain has postponed its planned showings of the film "The Interview."

Cineplex joins other top North American theater chains that have altered their plans after hackers threatened terrorist attacks at theaters showing the comedy.

Pat Marshall, a Cineplex spokeswoman, said Wednesday that "Cineplex takes seriously its commitment to the freedom of artistic expression, but we want to reassure our guests and staff that their safety and security is our No. 1 priority. We look forward to a time when this situation is resolved and those responsible are apprehended."

Cineplex has more than a 75 percent market share in Canada with 161 theaters with 1,639 screens.

SIDEBAR

Stars and others react to 'Interview' cancellation

LOS ANGELES (AP)—Stars, politicians and pundits are weighing in on Sony Pictures Entertainment's decision Wednesday to cancel the Dec. 25 release of "The Interview," the Seth Rogen-James Franco comedy at the center of the North Korean cyberattack that has seen thousands of Sony's private documents and other proprietary materials released online:

■ "Dear Sony Hackers: now that u run Hollywood, I'd also like less romantic comedies, fewer Michael Bay movies and no more Transformers. Also, Sony Hackers—I really liked Tyler Perry in "Gone Girl" so hold off on doing anything yet with Madea."—Michael Moore on Twitter.

■ "Sony has absolutely no courage or guts. They should have never pulled it."—Donald Trump via video on Facebook.

■ "No one should kid themselves. With the Sony collapse America has lost its first cyberwar. This is a very very dangerous precedent."—Newt Gingrich on Twitter.

■ "Sad day for creative expression. (hash)feareatsthesoul"—Steve Carell on Twitter.

■ "We should not let a pathological regime in N. Korea intimidate us. I'd be 1st on line to see (hash)TheInterviewMovie. Dear (at) SonyPictures—please make (hash)TheInterviewMovie available in DVD so I can decide whether to see it, not N. Korea."—Rep. Steve Israel, D-New York, on Twitter.

■ "Today the U.S. succumbed to an unprecedented attack on our most cherished, bedrock principle of free speech by a group of North Korean terrorists who threatened to kill moviegoers in order to stop the release of a movie. The wishes of the terrorists were fulfilled in part by easily distracted members of the American press who chose gossip and schadenfreude-fueled reporting over a story with immeasurable consequences for the public--a story that was developing right in front of their eyes. My deepest sympathies go out to Sony Pictures, Seth Rogen, Evan Goldberg and everyone who worked on 'The Interview.'"—Screenwriter Aaron Sorkin in a statement.

■ "An un-American act of cowardice that validates terrorist actions and sets a terrifying precedent."—Jimmy Kimmel to Judd Apatow on Twitter.

■ "This only guarantees that this movie will be seen by more people on Earth than it would have before. Legally or illegally all will see it."—Judd Apatow on Twitter.

■ "Wow. Everyone caved. The hackers won. An utter and complete victory for them. Wow. Saw (at)Sethrogen at JFK. Both of us have never seen or heard of anything like this. Hollywood has done Neville Chamberlain proud today."—Rob Lowe on Twitter.

■ "Is that all it takes—an anonymous threat and the numbers 911—to throw free expression under the bus?"—Bill Maher on Twitter.

■ "THE INTERVIEW is now poised to shatter the world record for "spite viewings.""—Comedian Patton Oswalt on Twitter.

■ "My recommendation would be that people go to the movies."—President Obama to ABC News.

$10 million in stolen Los Angeles art recovered

LOS ANGELES (AP)—Authorities have recovered $10 million worth of art—including paintings by Chagall and Diego Rivera—that were stolen in one of Los Angeles' largest art heists.

The FBI and Los Angeles recovered nine pieces of art at a West LA hotel in October, and a man was arrested, the Los Angeles Times reported, citing court documents.

The works, including Chagall's "Les Paysans" and Diego Rivera's "Mexican Peasant," were among a dozen swiped from the Encino home of a wealthy real estate investor on the morning of Aug. 24, 2008, by a crook or crooks who entered through the unlocked kitchen door, police said.

The elderly residents were in their bedrooms and heard nothing, police said.

The case grew cold until this September, when Detective Donald Hrycyk of the LAPD's art theft detail received a tip that a man in Europe known as "Darko" was seeking buyers for the stolen art, the Times said.

Darko "indicated that he was merely a middleman for an unknown person in possession of the art in California," Hrycyk wrote in a search warrant.

During the ensuing undercover operation, Raul Espinoza, 45, was contacted at the hotel, where he tried to sell the estimated $10 million worth of paintings for $700,000 cash, prosecutors contend.

Three stolen paintings remain missing.

Espinoza pleaded not guilty in October to receiving stolen property and remains jailed on $5 million bail.

Messages seeking comment were left for his public defender, Aparna Voleti, on Wednesday.

The Times said Hrycyk sought permission this month to search Espinoza's cellphone for possible photos or communications that could reveal the identities of the thieves involved in the original burglary.

Van Zandt fretted directing Springsteen in 'Lilyhammer'

NEW YORK (AP)—It's always a bit uncomfortable having to tell your boss what to do.

So imagine how Steven Van Zandt felt when he directed his longtime friend and E Street Band mate Bruce Springsteen when The Boss made his acting debut—appearing in the third season finale of the Netflix dramedy "Lilyhammer." (Springsteen also briefly appeared in the 2000 film "High Fidelity," but as himself rather than in an acting role).

AP

In this Nov. 19, 2013 file photo, actor and musician Steven Van Zandt attends a screening of the Netflix television series "Lilyhammer," in New York.

He says he was honored that Springsteen agreed to appear in the episode, which began airing on Nov. 21 and marked Van Zandt's directorial debut, but there was "a little bit of anxiety involved."

"I know we're friends for 50 years but still it meant a lot to me that he chose me and trusted me enough to direct him when literally everybody on earth's been wanting to do it ," said Van Zandt, who stars, writes, produces and composes music for the show.

"Lilyhammer" is a fish out of water story about fictional New York gangster Frank "The Fixer" Tagliano (Van Zandt), who is trying to start a new life in the Norwegian city of Lillehammer.

Springsteen played Frank's older brother Giuseppe—a small role that was key to the plot, Van Zandt said.

"He's really acting," says Van Zandt. "It's not some cameo. He's not playing himself. It's a real thing."

Van Zandt says it all went well and Springsteen "did great" as Giuseppe.

"Was if fun? Yeah, but it's more fun when it's over," he says with a laugh. "It's fun now."

Eric Idle brings 'Not the Messiah' to Carnegie Hall

NEW YORK (AP)—And now for something completely different.

During a time of year when Handel's "Messiah" is frequently presented around the world, Eric Idle of Monty Python fame brought "Not The Messiah (He's a Very Naughty Boy)" to Carnegie Hall, a comedic oratorio based on the movie "The Life of Brian."

From the opening overture of John Philip Sousa's "The Liberty Bell"—familiar as the theme of "Monty Python's Flying Circus" on BBC from 1969-74—the audience laughed loudly and repeatedly Tuesday night through the second of two shows at the New York City premiere performances.

"Not the Messiah" tells the story of Brian, born next door to Jesus and mistaken by others as God's son. There are a mix of musical styles, including rock `n' roll, gospel and a parody of the "Messiah" in a "Hail to the Shoe!" chorus. The closing number is "Always Look On the Bright Side"—sung by Brian in the movie as he was hanging from a crucifix.

There were the seemingly obligatory references to dead parrots and cross-dressing lumberjacks, chorus singers in yellow construction helmets and an appearance by that character from the movie with the lisp. There were jabs at former President George W. Bush and Martha Stewart, with Idle taking delight that for her "cell" once meant more than a mobile telephone.

Music featured four bagpipers marching down the aisles, mariachi and Idle spoofing a mumbling Bob Dylan. Singing stuffed sheep ambled onstage during the "We Love Sheep!" chorus.

Co-written by Idle and John Du Prez, who helped compose "Monty Python's Spamalot," the oratorio premiered in 2007 in Toronto and was divided in five parts over 80 minutes, not including intermission.

Idle, listed in the program as "Baritone-ish" in his role as the singing narrator, was joined by tenor William Ferguson as the bewildered and beleaguered Brian.

Mezzo-soprano Victoria Clark sang Brian's kvetching mother Mandy; soprano Lauren Worsham was Brian's sweet-voiced and wide-eyed girlfriend Judith; and bass Marc Kudisch as Brian's buddy Reg, who famously asks: "What have the Romans ever done for us?"

Film students to play role in Academy Awards show

LOS ANGELES (AP)—As many as six aspiring filmmakers will appear in next year's Academy Awards ceremony, and Channing Tatum will help them get there.

Oscar producers said Wednesday they're bringing back the Team Oscar program that invites young filmmakers to play a role in the awards show. Craig Zadan and Neil Meron say Tatum will once again serve as spokesman for Team Oscar and help choose its members.

The actor posted a video on YouTube inviting students to submit a 60-second video through the film academy's Facebook page to audition. American citizens ages 18 to 30 are eligible, and submissions are due Jan. 12.

The winning artists will be flown to Los Angeles to participate in Oscar week activities and appear on the Oscar ceremony as trophy carriers.

Stanford aims to bring player pianos back to life

By TERENCE CHEA
ASSOCIATED PRESS

STANFORD, Calif. (AP)—Stanford University wants to unlock the secrets of the player piano, which brought recorded music into living rooms long before there were cassettes, compact discs or iPods.

Stanford researchers have launched an ambitious effort to restore and study instruments known as reproducing pianos that recorded major composers performing their own work in the early 20th century.

"This technology of the reproducing piano was really astonishing to people at the time because they could hear major pianists playing music exactly the way they played in performance," said Jerry McBride, head music librarian at Stanford.

The researchers also plan to preserve and digitize thousands of perforated paper rolls that recorded and played back piano performances with impressive accuracy. They eventually hope to put the recordings online.

Stanford's Player Piano Project was bolstered by the recent acquisitions of three private collections of player pianos, piano-playing machines and music rolls.

Among them is an important collection from Denis Condon, an Australian who collected player pianos and rare music rolls for six decades before he died in August at age 78. It includes 10 reproducing pianos and more than 7,500 rolls, with recordings by composers such as George Gershwin, Scott Joplin, Igor Stravinsky and Claude Debussy.

"In some cases, we have no other recordings of these great artists, so in that sense they are an incredibly rare and very valuable window into the past," said Kumaran Arul, a music performance historian at the university.

This spring, the university plans to hold a campus concert featuring a restored player piano accompanied by the Stanford Symphony Orchestra.

Daughter refuses to open door to mon's new beau

DEAR ABBY: I have been divorced for more than a year and recently started dating a very nice man, "John." My eldest daughter and her children live with me. I'd like to be able to invite John over to our house, but my daughter doesn't want "strange men" around her kids, which I understand. I tried suggesting that she meet John before assuming that he is a strange man, but she's hesitant about meeting him.

Abby, I'd like to be able to spend some nights at home with him instead of always going out. It hurts because I have allowed the father of her children to live with us, yet I can't have someone I care about visit me at the home I work hard to pay for.

Please, Abby. I need advice on how to make my relationship with him and her work.

STRESSED IN THE MIDWEST

DEAR STRESSED: I wish I had more information about your daughter and her attitude. Did she disapprove of your divorce from her father and harbor hopes that you will reconcile? Could she be worried that if you and John become serious, she will have to find another place to live? That she'd refuse to even meet him seems peculiar.

It was generous of you to allow her children's father to live under your roof. (Has he left yet?) Notice that I said "under YOUR roof." If you want to entertain a guest, as the person who pays the mortgage, that should be your privilege. If that makes her uncomfortable, perhaps it would be better if she took the children to their father's or another relative's place for the evening.

You are entitled to live your life without your daughter controlling you, but it appears that may be exactly what she's trying to do.

DEAR ABBY: I am a very good swing dancer. I'm 22 and have been doing it since my sophomore year of high school. When I dance I feel alive and free.

My boyfriend of two years, "Jonah," whom I love dearly, isn't good at it. But he says he wants to learn so we can dance together.

We're going dancing this weekend and, truthfully, I don't want to go with him. When I asked him if it would be OK if I danced with some other dancer friends as well as with him, he said he was insulted and hurt by the question, and it would make him too jealous. I explained that I want to help him learn when we take lessons, but in the meantime, I want to dance freely.

I have ignored this issue for two years because I knew it would lead to a conflict. Should I suppress my love of dancing until Jonah is at my level or follow my heart and dance my socks off?

BALLROOM BETSY

DEAR ABBY

By ABIGAIL VAN BUREN
UNIVERSAL PRESS SYNDICATE

Dear Abby is written by Abigail Van Buren, also known as Jeanne Phillips, and was founded by her mother, Pauline Phillips. Contact Dear Abby at www.DearAbby.com or P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, CA 90069.

DEAR BALLROOM BETSY: How is Jonah doing with those dancing lessons? Has he even started? What if it turns out he has two left feet?

That he can't stand the idea of you dancing some of the dances with anyone else is a sign of insecurity. Are you willing to give up swing dancing to please him? If the answer is no, it may be time to change partners.

For everything you need to know about wedding planning, order "How to Have a Lovely Wedding." Send your name and mailing address, plus check or money order for $7 (U.S. funds) to: Dear Abby, Wedding Booklet, P.O. Box 447, Mount Morris, IL 61054-0447. (Shipping and handling are included in the price.)

Pastimes

Calvin and Hobbes

By Bill Waterson

DAD, IF YOU THREW A SNOWBALL AT SOMEONE, BUT DELIBERATELY MISSED, WOULD THAT BE "BAD"?
WELL, I SUPPOSE THAT WOULD BE PROVOKING. SO YES, IT WOULD BE A LITTLE BAD.
AS BAD AS IF YOU'D HIT THE PERSON?
NO, NOT THAT BAD, BUT WORSE THAN IF YOU HADN'T THROWN IT AT ALL.
SUPPOSE YOU JUST GRAZED THE PERSON. HOW BAD WOULD THAT BE?
SAY MAYBE YOU KNOCKED OFF HIS HAT AND HIS GLASSES OR SOMETHING.
THAT WOULD MEAN INSTANT DEATH.

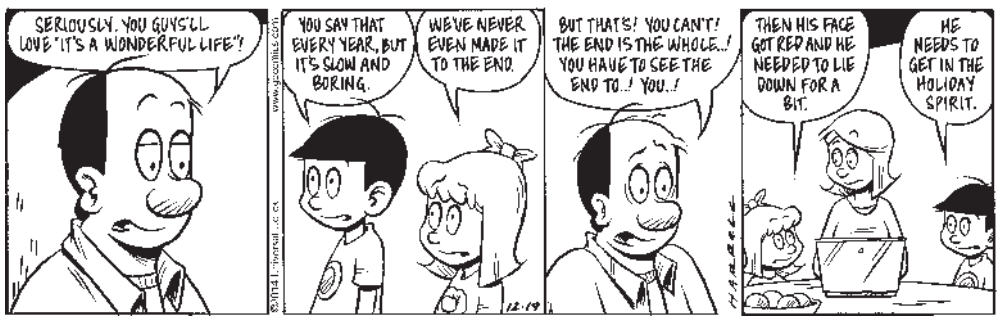
Garfield®

By Jim Davis

LIZ, I JUST DON'T KNOW WHAT TO GET YOU FOR CHRISTMAS!
OH, JON, YOU'RE ALL I NEED FOR CHRISTMAS
MAYBE SHE COULD EXCHANGE YOU FOR SOMETHING GOOD
JIM DAVIS 12-19

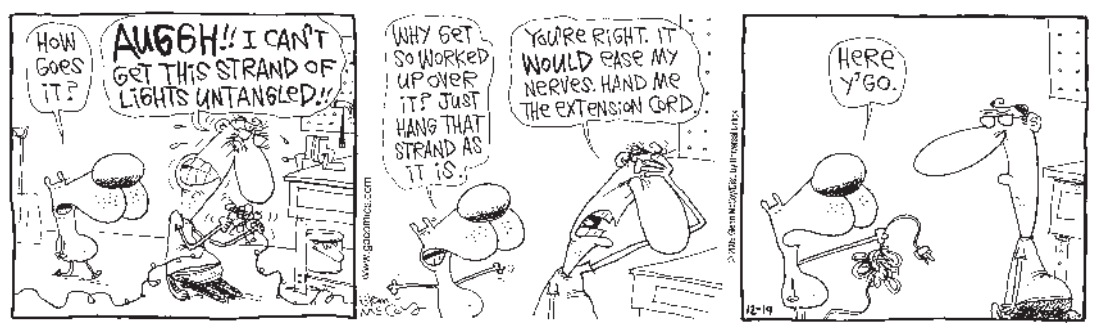
Adam@home

By Bryan Basset


SERIOUSLY. YOU GUYS'LL LOVE "IT'S A WONDERFUL LIFE"!
YOU SAY THAT EVERY YEAR, BUT IT'S SLOW AND BORING.
WE'VE NEVER EVEN MADE IT TO THE END.
BUT THAT'S! YOU CAN'T! THE END IS THE WHOLE..! YOU HAVE TO SEE THE END TO..! YOU..!
THEN HIS FACE GOT RED AND HE NEEDED TO LIE DOWN FOR A BIT.
HE NEEDS TO GET IN THE HOLIDAY SPIRIT.

The Duplex

By Glenn McCoy


HOW GOES IT?
AUGGH!! I CAN'T GET THIS STRAND OF LIGHTS UNTANGLED!!
WHY GET SO WORKED UP OVER IT? JUST HANG THAT STRAND AS IT IS.
YOU'RE RIGHT. IT WOULD ERASE MY NERVES. HAND ME THE EXTENSION CORD.
HERE Y'GO.

CROSSWORD

By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS
1 Lingerie item
4 Tavern
7 Swap
12 Young fellow
13 Rage
14 "Die Lorelei" poet
15 Multi-purpose truck
16 Big church
18 "A pox upon thee!"
19 Scoundrel
20 Road diver-gence
22 Dos Passos trilogy
23 Garbage barge
27 Tummy muscles
29 Old name for China
31 Speechify
34 Hotel accom-modation
35 "My Antonia" writer
37 Cudgel
38 Yon folks
39 Bullring bravo
41 Tubular pasta
45 Shows patience
47 Crib
48 Causing release
52 "Erie Canal" mule
53 Elevator stop
54 Japanese veggie
55 Mound stat
56 Bonnie's partner
57 Favorite
58 Unfavor-able vote

DOWN
1 Texas Hold 'Em tactic
2 Propor-tion
3 "Doe, — ..."
4 Choose
5 Faraway orb
6 Greek conso-nants
7 Quaker address
8 Roulette bet
9 Atmo-sphere
10 "CSI" evidence
11 Slithery swimmer
17 Indoor climate-control tech.
21 Comic Griffin
23 Bearcat maker
24 Actor McBride
25 Feedbag morsel
26 Ex follower
28 Spelldown
30 Simile center
31 Autumn abbr.
32 Cheery sound?
33 Corroded
36 Bellow
37 Happen to
40 Bright-ened
42 "A Doll's House" play-wright
43 Miss America's bling
44 Some dental work
45 Kind of house
46 High-lander
48 Refriger-ant inits.
49 Every-thing
50 Play-thing
51 Coal carrier

Solution time: 25 mins.

G	E	M	■	C	L	U	E	■	E	F	T	S
A	L	I	■	R	I	S	E	■	Y	C	W	L
M	■	C	H	E	N	E	R	■	E	R	I	E
■	■	I	O	W	■	D	I	S	B	A	N	D
S	P	I	D	E	R	■	E	L	R	■	■	■
H	O	G	■	L	U	G	■	B	O	M	B	S
A	S	A	P	■	M	O	W	■	W	I	I	F
D	E	N	I	M	■	D	O	M	■	C	U	E
■	■	■	N	O	N	■	K	O	S	H	E	R
D	A	Y	B	O	O	K	■	T	E	E	■	■
A	N	E	A	■	M	I	C	H	E	L	L	E
S	■	L	L	■	A	L	O	E	■	I	A	N
H	A	L	L	■	D	O	O	F	■	N	Y	C

Yesterday's answer 12-19

1	2	3	■	4	5	6	■	7	8	9	10	11
12			■	13			■	14				
15			■	16			17					
18			■	19					■	■	■	■
20			21	■	22			■	23	24	25	26
■	■	■	27	28		■	29	30				
31	32	33			■	■	■	34				
35					36	■	37			■	■	■
38				■	39	40		■	41	42	43	44
■	■	■	■	45				46	■	47		
48	49	50	51						■	52		
53					■	54			■	55		
56					■	57			■	58		

STUMPED? For answers to today's crossword, call **1-900-226-5955**! 99¢ per minute, touch-tone/rotary phones. (18+ only.) A King Features service, NYC.

CELEBRITIES BORN ON THIS DAY: Marla Sokoloff, 34; Jake Gyllenhaal, 34; Alyssa Milano, 42; Jennifer Beals, 51.

Happy Birthday: Your helpful attitude will put you in the limelight. Focus on what you can do to make your surroundings, community and neighborhood a better place. Don't let uncertainty slow you down or cloud your vision. Ask questions to find the information you require to turn your ideas and plans into a reality. It's up to you to make things happen. Your numbers are 3, 12, 24, 27, 34, 41, 43.

ARIES (*March 21-April 19*): Harness your skills and present what you have to offer. Look at the big picture and the destinations you have in mind. Don't let someone you work with stress you out. Believe in yourself and your abilities. ✪✪✪

TAURUS (*April 20-May 20*): Express your ideas and expand your creative awareness. Get involved in events that offer a look at other cultures. Experience is the spice of life and can help you make adjustments to your way of living that will bring you greater happiness. ✪✪✪

GEMINI (*May 21-June 20*): A personal change will open up a host of new possibilities. Do your research and get the lowdown on costs involved before you move forward. Impulse is the enemy, but with practical application, a positive change will unfold. ✪✪✪

CANCER (*June 21-July 22*): Stop fretting over the things you cannot control. Look at what you have and be thankful. Difficult partnerships will help push you to make personal adjustments that will guide you into the new year with greater clarity. ✪✪✪✪

LEO (*July 23-Aug. 22*): Expect to face opposition if you've been overspending or doing things that don't include someone who cares about you. A change of location will help you see things clearly and encourage you to make a move that will improve your personal life. ✪✪✪✪

VIRGO (*Aug. 23-Sept. 22*): Emotional disillusionment will take over. Don't believe everything you hear. You are best to do your own thing and take care of your responsibilities without relying on anyone for help. Love is in the stars, but so is deception. ✪✪

LIBRA (*Sept. 23-Oct. 22*): Get out into your community and participate in a worthwhile cause. The less time spent at home, the better. Someone close to you will not understand your reasoning. Do your best to keep busy and you'll avoid an emotional mishap. ✪✪✪

SCORPIO (*Oct. 23-Nov. 21*): Set up talks that will help you plan your course of action in the new year. What you do to secure your work relationships will make a difference. Network and socialize with colleagues, and you will make a lasting impression. ✪✪✪

SAGITTARIUS (*Nov. 22-Dec. 21*): Make home improvements that will delight the people you love. Host a party or make arrangements to travel to see friends or family. Doing your best to reconnect with the people you enjoy the most will be fun as well as informative. ✪✪✪

EUGENIA LAST

THE LAST WORD IN ASTROLOGY

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CAPRICORN (*Dec. 22-Jan. 19*): Take care of business and clear your calendar for end-of-the-year enjoyment. Love and romance are highlighted, and making an impression on someone special will bring you closer together. Ask questions and put uncertainty to rest. ✪✪✪✪

AQUARIUS (*Jan. 20-Feb. 18*): Be careful what you say and how you deal with your responsibilities. A begrudging attitude will not buy you any favors. Pitch in, do your part and you will get what you want in the end. A career change looks promising. ✪✪

PISCES (*Feb. 19-March 20*): Do what feels right. Don't let anyone take advantage of you or lead you down a path that isn't in your best interest. Express your true feelings and plan to make a move or pick up new skills in the new year. ✪✪✪✪✪

Birthday Baby: You are competitive, strong-willed and determined. You are in control.

*Eugenia's website—**eugenialast.com**, Eugenia's android app @ **http://bit.ly/exhoro** and join Eugenia on **twitter/facebook/linkedin**.*

SUDOKU

Conceptis Sudoku *By Dave Green*

			7		1			
3		9	5		8	6		2
	8						4	
6	5						8	9
4	9						3	7
	2						6	
7		8	3		5	1		4
			4		6			

Difficulty Level ★★★★ 12/19

Sudoku is a number-placing puzzle based on a 9x9 grid with several given numbers. The object is to place the numbers 1 to 9 in the empty squares so that each row, each column and each 3x3 box contains the same number only once. The difficulty level of the Conceptis Sudoku increases from Monday to Saturday.

Yesterday's SUDOKU Answer

3	6	7	2	9	1	5	8	4
5	2	8	3	6	4	1	7	9
1	9	4	8	7	5	3	2	6
9	4	6	5	1	8	7	3	2
8	5	2	4	3	7	6	9	1
7	1	3	9	2	6	4	5	8
6	8	1	7	5	2	9	4	3
2	3	5	1	4	9	8	6	7
4	7	9	6	8	3	2	1	5

Difficulty level ★★★ 12/18

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WONDERWORD®

By DAVID OUELLET

HOW TO PLAY: All the words listed below appear in the puzzle — horizontally, vertically, diagonally, even backward. Find them and **CIRCLE THEIR LETTERS ONLY. DO NOT CIRCLE THE WORD.** The leftover letters spell the Wonderword.

NEW & OLD COINS OF THE WORLD **Solution: 8 letters**

T	A	T	E	S	E	P	B	G	T	E	T	R	I	E
N	Y	N	N	E	P	S	A	N	P	P	O	H	S	M
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Grizzlies outlast Spurs in 3 overtimes, 117-116

SAN ANTONIO (AP)—The Memphis Grizzlies ended years of frustration in San Antonio, and had to play late into the night to do it.

Marc Gasol scored 26 points, including a banked-in 3-pointer as regulation expired, and Memphis overcame blowing a 23-point lead for a 117-116 triple-overtime victory over the Spurs on Wednesday.

The Grizzlies were seconds from defeat at the close of regulation and in the first and third overtimes, but showed the fortitude needed to snap a 10-game losing streak in San Antonio.

Memphis had not won at the AT&T Center since sweeping the Spurs in the 2011 playoffs.

"It's the biggest game for us because they've been beating us," Grizzlies forward Zach Randolph said. "The last time we won here was what, the playoffs, right? It's a long time. They have our number. It felt good to get a win, to get that confidence."

Randolph had 21 points and 21 rebounds in Memphis' sixth straight victory. Vince Carter added a season-high 18 points for Memphis (21-4).

The Grizzlies were fresh off snapping Golden State's 16-game winning streak Tuesday night, but they were sharper early than the rested Spurs, who were without injured starters Tony Parker and Kawhi Leonard.

Danny Green scored 25 points, and Tim Duncan had 23 points and 16 rebounds for San Antonio. His jumper rattled in to force the third OT, but he finished just 5 for 15 on free throws.

San Antonio made a season-high 17 3-pointers but was 13 for 27 on free throws, including 5 for 15 by Duncan.

Manu Ginobili added 21 points, but shot an airball on a 3-pointer in the final seconds for the Spurs.

"Everybody tries to win the game," San Antonio coach Gregg Popovich said. "It just didn't fall for him."

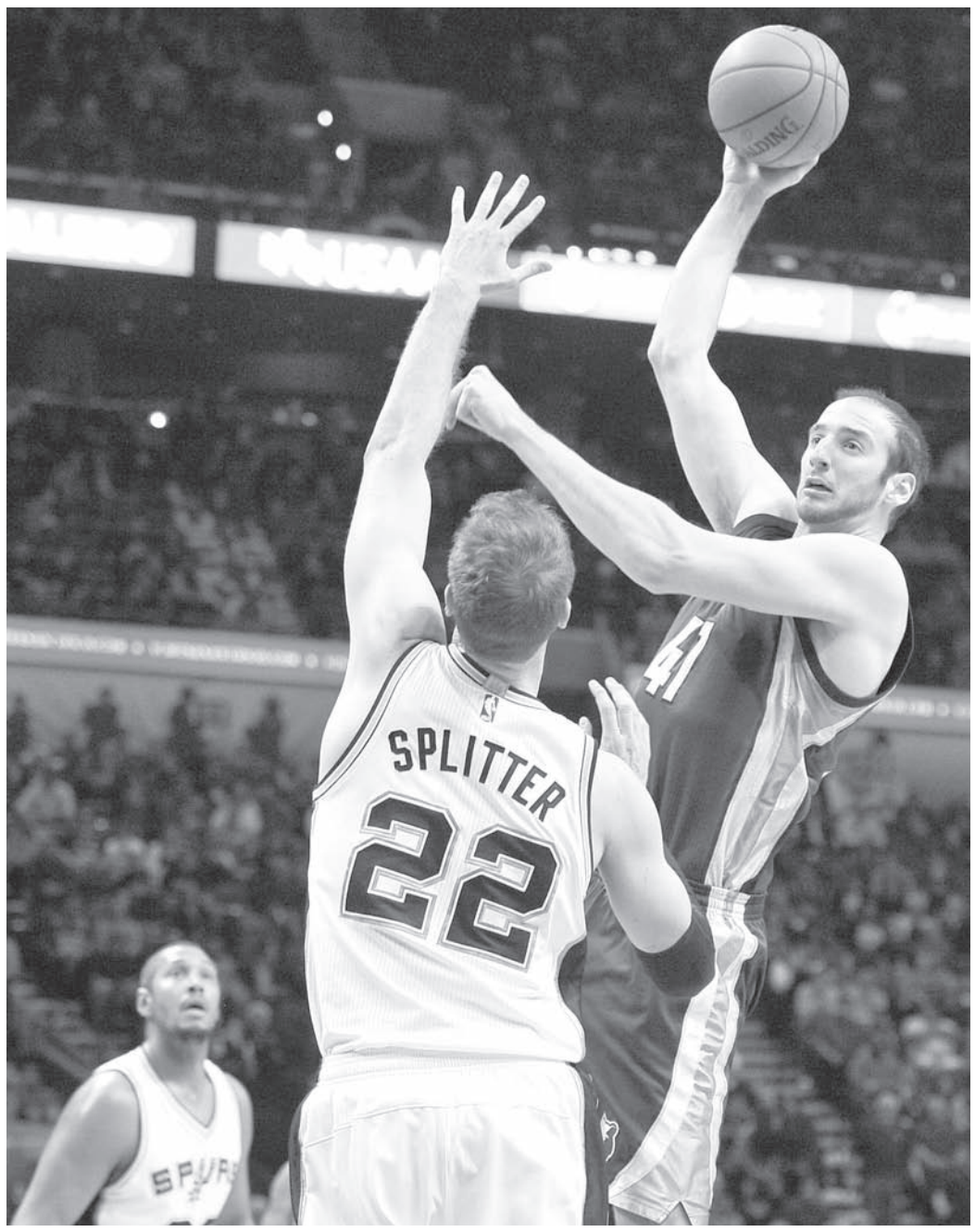
Duncan hit a fallaway, high-arcing jumper that bounded on the rim three times before dropping in to tie the game at 111 at the close of the second overtime.

"Whew, man," Randolph said, laughing when asked about Duncan's shot. "Take the life out of you."

But Memphis was able to revive quickly.

After Green's fifth 3-pointer gave San Antonio a 92-89 lead with 2.5 seconds remaining in regulation, Gasol banked in a 30-footer against Ginobili as time expired.

Green tumbled to the floor and injured his knee while colliding in midair with Mike Conley on an outlet pass, giving Memphis a 5-on-4 situation that resulted in Gasol's layup that tied the game at 102 with 9.3 seconds left. Ginobili missed a 7-foot running jumper to end the first OT.



AP

Memphis Grizzlies center Kosta Koufos, right, shoots against San Antonio Spurs forward Tiago Splitter, of Brazil, during the second half of an NBA basketball game, Wednesday, Dec. 17, 2014, in San Antonio. Memphis won in triple overtime, 117-116.

Hawks 127, Cavaliers 98

In Cleveland, Shelvin Mack scored a career-high 24 points and the Atlanta Hawks routed the Cleveland Cavaliers 127-98 Wednesday night for their 11th victory in 12 games.

Mack, a reserve guard who came in averaging 3.8 points, made all six of his 3-pointers as the Hawks went 16 for 28 from behind the arc.

Trailing 50-38 midway through the second quarter, Atlanta outscored Cleveland 89-48 the rest of the way and sent the Cavaliers to their largest loss of the season.

The Hawks, playing without leading scorer Jeff Teague, avenged a 127-94 loss in Cleveland on Nov. 15, when the Cavaliers made their first 11 shots from 3-point range.

LeBron James scored 21 points but didn't play in the fourth quarter. The Cavaliers have lost three of four since winning eight straight.

Raptors 105, Nets 89

In Toronto, Kyle Lowry had 20 points and 12 assists, Jonas Valanciunas added 16 points and 10 rebounds, and Toronto used a big fourth quarter to beat Brooklyn.

Amir Johnson and Patrick Patterson each scored 13 in the first meeting between the teams since Brooklyn's one-point win in Game 7 of the first round of the playoffs last May.

Patterson and Lou Williams each scored eight points in the fourth as Toronto outscored the Nets 29-16, taking advantage of six Brooklyn turnovers.

Mason Plumlee had a career-high 23 points for the Nets, who made only five of 13 field goal attempts and five of 13 free throws in the fourth.

Toronto, which leads the Eastern Conference at 20-6, reached 20 wins before Christmas for the first time in its 20-year history.

Mavericks 117, Pistons 106

In Auburn Hills, Chandler Parsons scored a season-high 32 points and Monta Ellis added 25 as Dallas beat Detroit.

Parsons fell two points short of a career high as he helped the Mavericks win a second road game in two nights. Dirk Nowitzki contributed 18 points and 10 rebounds, including seven points to help stem a late Detroit rally.

Andre Drummond had 19 points and 24 rebounds, but couldn't help the Pistons end an 11-game losing streak at home. Detroit's last win at the Palace came on Nov. 7 against Milwaukee.

Jazz 105, Heat 87

In Miami, Gordon Hayward scored 29 points, Enes Kanter added 18 and Utah overcame 42 points from Dwyane Wade to beat Miami.

Alec Burks scored 12, Derrick Favors added 11 and Dante Exum had 10 for Utah, which won for just the second time in its last 14 games. Those two wins have come against last year's NBA finalists, San Antonio and now the Heat—who are simply reeling at home.

Wade shot 12 of 19 for Miami, which has lost seven of its last eight home games and has dropped four straight on its floor for the first time since 2011. The Heat trailed by 17 in the first quarter and never recovered.

Suns 111, Hornets 106

In Charlotte, Reserve guard Isaiah Thomas scored 23 points, Goran Dragic had 20 and Phoenix snapped a six-game losing streak with a victory over struggling Charlotte.

Thomas was 7 of 13 from the field and had two key free throws in the final minute as the Suns erased an early 17-point deficit.

Dragic, who missed the last two games with a back injury, played 38 minutes and shot 8 of 17. Gerald Green had 16 points off the bench and Eric Bledsoe chipped in with 15 for the Suns.

Al Jefferson had 28 points and 10 rebounds for Charlotte. Kemba Walker scored 27 points before going cold in the final three minutes. The Hornets have lost four straight, and they fell to 1-11 against Western Conference teams.

Celtics 109, Magic 92

In Boston, Rajon Rondo had 13 points, 15 assists and seven rebounds to lead balanced scoring that carried Boston past Orlando.

Brandon Bass scored 18 points, and Jeff Green and Jared Sullinger each finished with 16. Kelly Olynyk added 15 points for the Celtics, who won their second in a row after a three-game losing streak.

Nikola Vucevic had 18 points with 13 rebounds, and Tobias Harris scored 17 for the Magic, who have lost four of five.

Trail Blazers 104, Bucks 97

In Portland, LaMarcus Aldridge had 23 points and 15 rebounds, and the Portland Trail Blazers pulled away in the fourth quarter to beat the Milwaukee Bucks 104-97 Wednesday night with both teams reeling from injuries to key players.

Damian Lillard added 29 points and seven assists for the Blazers, who have won three straight and eight of 10 despite losing starting center Robin Lopez to a broken hand on Monday.

Thomas Robinson, who started in Lopez's absence, sparked the Blazers with 15 points and 16 rebounds, both season highs.

Clippers 102, Pacers 100

In Los Angeles, Blake Griffin had 31 points and 16 rebounds, DeAndre Jordan added 23 rebounds and 15 points, and the Los Angeles Clippers beat the Indiana Pacers 102-100 on Wednesday night.

Chris Paul had 20 points and nine assists, helping the two-time defending Pacific Division champions win for the 11th time in 13 games.

The Pacers, who snapped an eight-game losing streak with their 110-91 rout of the Lakers on Monday night at Indiana, dropped their seventh straight road game. David West and reserve C.J. Miles each had 17 points as seven players scored in double figures.

The Pacers made only three field goals in the final 5:38, and Miles missed a potential game-winning 3-pointer at the final horn.

SIDEBAR

Mavericks, Celtics in talks for Rondo trade

BOSTON (AP)—Boston Celtics are engaged in discussions on several fronts to trade All-Star guard Rajon Rondo, with the Dallas Mavericks emerging as a motivated suitor.

Boston has been exchanging proposals with several teams on Rondo, including the Mavericks and Houston Rockets, sources said.

As part of package, the Mavericks are willing to give Boston a 2015 first-round pick with limited lottery protection.

Before a deal is consummated, Dallas needs to confer with Rondo's agent, Bill Duffy, about the franchise's ability to re-sign him as a free agent in the summer. Those conversations wouldn't happen until an agreement is in place.

The Mavericks' interest has grown in the past several days, prompting the organization to begin further fact-finding on Rondo, sources said. The Mavericks are searching for ways to close the gap with the first-place Golden State Warriors, and are weighing a Rondo-Monta Ellis backcourt.

Celtics general manager Danny Ainge seems determined to mine the best offer out of the market and move Rondo soon, making a full commitment to a rebuild. Boston has two first-round picks still to come from the Brooklyn Nets over the next three years and Ainge will have a chance to completely overhaul his roster.

Trade talks with Rondo have been focused more in the Western Conference than Eastern, sources said.

Boston has been consistently shopping forward Jeff Green, trying to acquire a package that includes a first-round draft pick, sources said. Rondo being available would suggest Ainge is prepared to undergo a deeper rebuilding project and push harder for the highest possible draft position in the 2015 NBA draft.

Rondo, 28, will be a free agent in July, and Boston has been reluctant to meet his hope for a maximum—or near max—contract extension. Boston has been pleased with rookie point guard Marcus Smart, and could decide to turn the team over to him in a post-Rondo era.

Rondo has averaged eight points, 10.6 assists and 7.5 rebounds a game this season.

49ers release McDonald amid further legal trouble

SANTA CLARA, Calif. (AP)—Citing a pattern of behavior and off-field issues, San Francisco 49ers general manager Trent Baalke informed defensive lineman Ray McDonald that he was released Wednesday amid a sexual assault investigation by San Jose police.

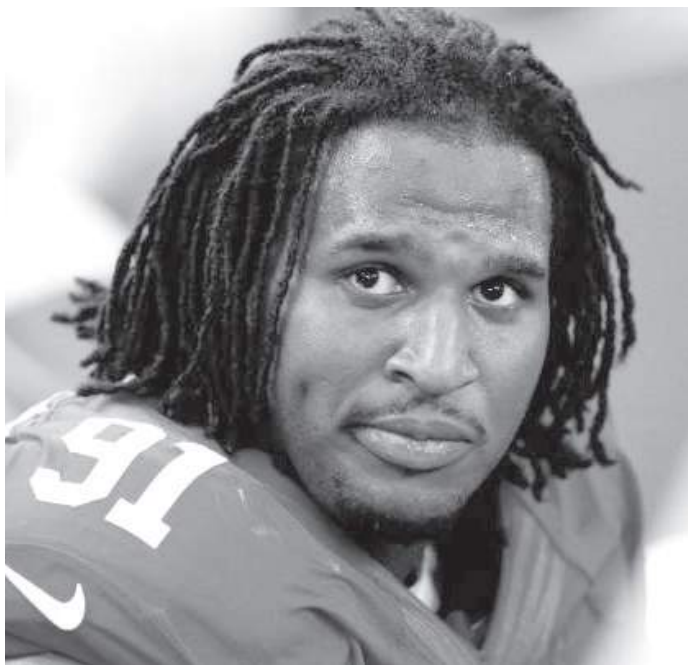
Baalke spoke with McDonald and his agent by phone around 11:30 a.m. PST to let them know the defender is "terminated"

"After the recent allegations concerning Ray McDonald, we as an organization notified him and his agent that he will be terminated, released immediately, effective immediately," Baalke said. "While this organization has a strong belief in due process and has demonstrated that over time, Ray's demonstrated a pattern of poor decision-making that has led to multiple distractions to this organization and this football team that really can no longer be tolerated."

Baalke said CEO Jed York and coach Jim Harbaugh also were involved in the decision.

"We expect a lot from our players, hold them accountable for their actions," Baalke said. "This is a situation that we can all learn from."

Baalke said the 49ers notified the NFL of the allegations against McDonald, saying: "This is a team decision. This is not a league decision."



AP

In this Sept. 7, 2014, file photo, San Francisco 49ers' Ray McDonald sits on the bench during the second half of an NFL football game against the Dallas Cowboys in Arlington.

San Jose police Sgt. Heather Randol said Wednesday that the department is investigating McDonald on suspicion of sexual assault and had searched his San Jose home.

Randol said an area hospital notified police late Tuesday night that a woman was seeking treatment.

"The victim alleged she was possibly sexually assaulted a day prior," Randol said. "Based on preliminary investigation, detectives secured a search warrant and served it at the alleged suspect's residence in San Jose."

Randol didn't immediately respond to follow up questions seeking to clarify the reference to the alleged victim saying she was "possibly" sexually assaulted.

No arrests have been made nor charges filed. McDonald's agent, Tom Condon, didn't immediately return a call seeking comment.

McDonald's mother, Labrina McDonald, told the San Jose Mercury News the allegation was "laughable" and not true.

She said her son warned her not to talk to the media, but she told the paper that "there's no truth to that stuff."

NFL spokesman Greg Aiello said the league is "looking into" the case.

York spoke to the 49ers players about two weeks ago about conduct before NFL owners unanimously approved changes last week to the league's personal-conduct policy - and "it was clear" what the expectations are with the 49ers, linebacker Dan Skuta said.

"You just really don't know what to believe, so I'm not getting mad at Ray," Skuta said. "Obviously you want him here with you and you're a little upset he's not here. I have no business getting upset with him for something that he may or may not have done."

This is the second time in recent months that McDonald has been the subject of a police investigation.

Last month, the Santa Clara County district attorney's office announced that it declined to file charges against the defensive lineman in a domestic violence investigation. He was arrested Aug. 31 while celebrating his then-upcoming 30th birthday at his home.

Following the arrest, York, Baalke and Harbaugh repeatedly said they have zero tolerance for domestic violence. The 49ers stuck by McDonald throughout the investigation, with Harbaugh regularly saying that "due process" would play out. He played despite outside pressure on Harbaugh and the organization to bench him.

Giants re-sign Romo for two years, $15M

SAN FRANCISCO (AP)—The San Francisco Giants haven't done much this offseason beyond getting sized for their World Series rings. They earned the bronze medal in the Jon Lester sweepstakes. They haven't addressed their need in left field. They watched Pablo Sandoval leave for Boston, leaving another hole at third base.

At the very least, the Giants aren't letting another fan favorite leave.

The Giants have reportedly re-signed relief pitcher Sergio Romo, their former closer, to a two-year, $15 million deal, according to Ken Rosenthal of Fox Sports. It's pending a physical. It's not an earth-shattering move, but for antsy Giants fans who are watching plenty of moves happen around them, it's something.

Romo, who'll be 32 during the 2015 season, is a lifelong Giant. He was drafted and developed by San Francisco, a 28th-round draft pick who would eventually become its closer. He lost that job in 2014 after a rough spell, but served as a setup man afterward.

He's not a flame-thrower by any means. Romo depends on his slider and it's served him well throughout his career. He has a 2.51 ERA in 251 career innings dating back to 2008.

The Giants' next move? Many think they're a good fit for free-agent pitcher James Shields, which would be a much bigger signing than two more years of Romo.

In San Diego, the Padres acquired outfielder Wil Myers from the Tampa Bay Rays on Wednesday, a person with knowledge of the deal said.

Myers was the AL Rookie of the Year in 2013, when he hit .293 with 13 homers with 53 RBIs with Tampa Bay. But he was limited to 87 games last season due to a right wrist injury, and he hit .222 with six homers and 35 RBIs.

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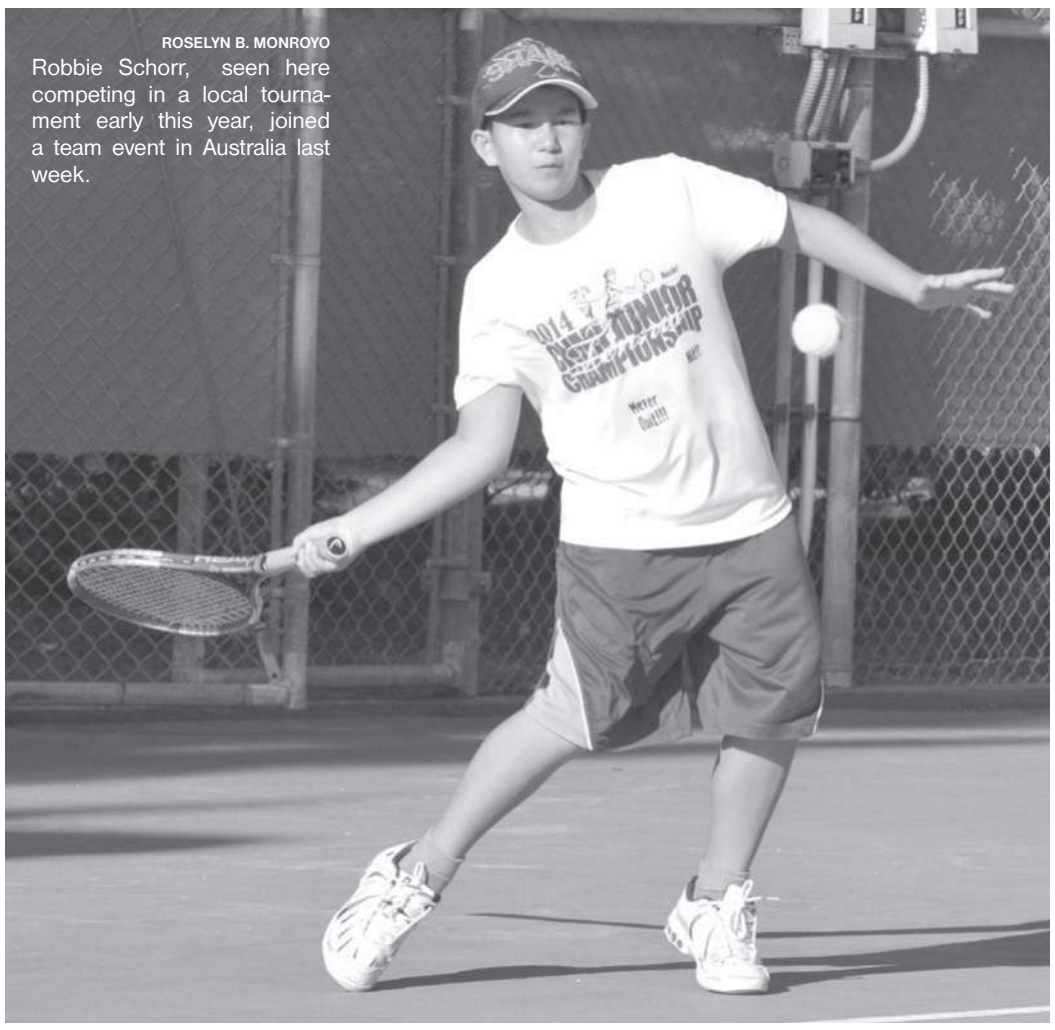
Schorr, Miyawaki join team tourney in Aussie



ROSELYN B. MONROYO
Robbie Schorr, seen here competing in a local tournament early this year, joined a team event in Australia last week.

By ROSELYN B. MONROYO
roselyn_monroyo@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

The CNMI's Malika Miyawaki managed to save a win in a team tournament in Australia last weekend, while Robbie Schorr dropped two matches.

Miyawaki played the second singles rubber for the Pacific Oceania Touring Team and defeated Australian Capital Territory's Ashleigh Simes in the Girls 12s Margaret Court Cup, 7-5, 7-6. She was the lone player on her squad to win a match in the pairing as Pacific Oceania dropped the first (singles) and third rubber (doubles). Tahiti's Naia Guitton fell to Annerly Poulos, 0-6, 2-6, and also lost her and Lea Lamorelle's doubles tiff against Simes and Poulos, 6-2, 6-2.

Pacific Oceania went on to drop its first game in the team tournament, 20-35, and was relegated to the loser's bracket where it was paired against South Australia A.

Miyawaki suited up for Pacific Oceania's doubles team versus South Australia, partnering with Guitton in playing in the third rubber against Natasha Russell and Alana Repanich. The two Aussie bets prevailed in the pro-set, 8-2 to lift their team to a 22-13 victory. Guitton and Lamorelle also faltered in their separate singles games with the former falling short in a three-set match against Repanich, 6-2, 2-6, 3-10, and the latter beaten via sweep by Charlotte Kepenaers-Pocz, 1-6, 1-6.

With two losses, Miyawaki and company failed to advance to the plays and settled for the 10th place. The visiting squad finished ahead of Tasmania and Northern Territory, while Queensland ruled the competition after downing New Zealand.

In the Boys 12 Rod Laver Cup, Schorr and his Pacific Oceania squad also placed 10th, edging Tasmania and Western Australia. Japan, China, Victoria A, New Zealand, and South Australia made it to the Top 5, followed by Northern Territory, Victoria B, New South Wales, and Queensland.

Pacific Oceania had a very tough opening assignment in Japan, which cruised to a lopsided 21-4 win. Incidentally, Schorr gave Pacific Oceania its lone point in the match when he bowed to Ryota Caneda in the second rubber, 1-6, 0-6. In the first rubber, Schorr's teammate Clement Mainguy did not score in his loss to Ryota Koshiba.

The defeat against the favored Japanese put Pacific Oceania in the loser's bracket versus Victoria and although Schorr and his teammates lost the pairing anew, the squad played better. Schorr was pitted against Luke Vuletic and lost, 3-6, 3-6, while the Gilliant Osmont also fell to John Amato, 2-6, 0-6. In the doubles, Amato and Cooper White downed Osmont and Mainguy, 8-4, to power Victoria B to a 25-12 win.

MISO boys caging, girls v'ball set next month

By JON PEREZ
jon_perez@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

The respective seasons of the boys basketball and girls basketball in Marianas Interscholastic Sports Organization are set to open in separate play dates next month at the Marianas High School Gymnasium.

The Boys basketball will open on Jan. 7, while action in the girls volleyball starts the following day, Jan. 8.

A total of 12 teams will be competing in the boys basketball with defending champion MHS aiming to keep the title. The Dolphins defeated Kagman High School, 37-36, on a Mike Arciaga putback last year to reclaim the crown they last won during the 2008-2009 season. Kagman, after losing to MHS, won back-to-back (2009-2010 and 2010-2011) while Tinian High School, which only joins in the double elimination finals, ruled the league also in two straight seasons (2011-2012 and 2012-2013).

Kagman 9, MHS 9, Saipan Southern High School junior varsity,Kagman junior varsity, Grace Christian Academy, MHS junior varsity, SSHS 9, Saipan International School, Marianas Baptist Academy, and Mt. Carmel School are the other competing teams.

A triple-header will kick things off in the boys basketball with KHS 9 opening up the matches against MHS 9 at 4pm. The junior varsity teams of Saipan Southern and Kagman will play at 5:20pm, while MHS begins its title defense bid against GCA at 6:30pm.

Only a 12-man roster is allowed for the boys varsity team in basketball, while the junior varsity and 9th graders can have as much as 15 members. The boys basketball jamboree will be held on Jan. 17.

Meanwhile, 13 teams will be playing in the girls volleyball led by defending champion MHS, which defeated Grace Christian Academy in last year's finals, 24-26, 25-20, 18-16. The varsity and junior varsity teams will have 15-member rosters.

The first four play dates in the girls volleyball, Jan. 8 to 20, will play all three sets regardless of the outcome of the first two sets, while beginning on Jan. 22 it will be the standard 2 out of 3 sets. The volleyball jamboree will be on Jan. 24.

MISO executive director Nick Gross said report cards (minimum of 2.25 GPA with no F's), parental release forms, and current physical must be submitted by all teams not later than Jan. 6.

In related news, the girls soccer will be scheduled at a later date with the varsity and JV teams allowed to submit 18-member rosters.

ROSELYN B. MONROYO
Marianas High School's Ignacio Borja goes up for a shot against Kagman High School's Melvin Sakisat Jr., right, and Mike Muna, partially hidden, during the fourth quarter of their title game in last season's MISO caging at the Gilbert C. Ada Gymnasium.

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ahead of teammate Aika Watanabe in the event, as the latter timed in at 1:34.73.

Tammy joined two other races last weekend. In the 100m freestyle, she finished first and defeated three other swimmers after touching the wall at the 1:08.48 mark. Tammy's PBT in the event is 1:08.14. In the 50m freestyle, the 12-year-old swimmer also won the event after recording 31.88 seconds. She prevailed against Sophia Gauran (32.90 seconds) Kyona Rivera (34.85 seconds), Watanabe (36.91 seconds), and Ailynn Galvan (1:02.70), but missed beating her PBT (31.28 seconds).

In the girls U8 age group, Dangol crushed her PBT and the division mark (41.69), which she set on Oct. 4, after timing in at 39.17 in last Saturday's competition. Dangol won over teammate Shaunaly Babauta, who completed the race in 1:11.09.

Dangol had two other events in the same tournament, racing in the 50m freestyle and 200m medley relay. She defeated eight other swimmers in the 50m freestyle event after posting 38.26 seconds and then teamed up with Babauta, Kana Suzuki, and Maria Batallones in recording 3:43.57 in the girls U8 relay race.

In the girls 17 to 18 age group's 50m breaststroke, Rivera clocked in at 42.62 seconds to break her own mark (43.76 seconds) registered on Oct. 4, 2014. Rivera also swam in the 100m breaststroke and her 1:36.02 gave her a new PBT, surpassing her 1:38.11.

Meanwhile, results of other races and the swimmers' PBT will be reported in *Saipan Tribune* next week.

UFC

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Fight in the UFC and represent the people of the Marianas," said Camacho, who last week made a winning return to his MMA roots when he forced South Korean Jae Woong Kim to submission via arm triangle choke in the first round of their non-title bout in Trench Warz 18: Rock & Rumble at the packed Royal Taga Hall of the Saipan World Resort.

Camacho came out victorious in his return fight in Trench Warz despite receiving only a six-week notice.

"That's why I planned to end the fight against Kim right away. Kim's a very strong wrestler and an explosive fighter that's why I tried to slow him down by delivering punches on the right side of his body and ribcage," the MMA fighter said.

Camacho, who is now based in Guam , added his UFC dream would all depend on the chances that will be given to him.

"It's hinged on different opportunities that will be presented to me. Just last month, I came home from San Diego where I trained there for six months," said the 25-year-old fighter, who was born in Guam and raised on Saipan.

"I need to stay healthy this time after I hurt my back in June. I'm happy with all the help that I get from my team and Trench Tech—they get me back into fighting shape. A lot of people helped me with my rehab and I've been doing the right exercises to strengthen my back," said Camacho.

"I need to stay active since there's a PXC event in March. And I'm ready to fight again," he added.

With a lot of young and rising fighters looking up to him, Camacho urged them to work harder in everything they do.

"They should find the best gym. Stay healthy and discipline, keep a positive attitude, and work harder. Everything will fall into place if you really put your mind into it," Camacho ended.

GAMBOA

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The Feds' defense was also in full throttle, forcing DCCA to numerous missed shots and turnovers the entire game. It held DCCA to a season-low 3 points in the third quarter and entered the final canto enjoying a comfortable 38-point spread, 66-28.

DCCA fired blanks and most of its points came in the latter half of the fourth period with the final score the only thing to be settled.

Garth Backe added 8 markers and had 4 assists for the Feds, while Juan Camacho and big man Ken McCain combined for 16 points and 17 rebounds. The usually explosive Leo Apelo, who usually backs up Gamboa in scoring, had a quiet 7 markers.

Ed Pangelinan led DCCA's losing cause with 19 points, while Perry Inos finished with 15 points, 8 rebounds, 2 steals, and an assist. No other DCCA player scored in double digits with Tim Wesley, who scattered 18 in their win over the Customs the other night, held to 5.

Feds 84–Gamboa 41, Backe 8, Camacho 8, McKane 8, Apelo 7, Deleon Guerrero 5, Ogarto 3, Paras 2, Park 2.

DCCA 49–Pangelinan 19, Inos 15, Wesley 5, Ra. Deleon Guerrero Jr. 4, Ro. Deleon Guerrero 4, Rosario Jr. 3, Manabat 2.

Scoring by quarters: 21-10, 43-25, 66-28, 84-49.

2014 BANMI Youth League U21 Finals

PHOTOS BY ROSELYN B. MONROYO

The 670 Sonics' Jack Aranda drives against the Ol'Aces' Ezra Caro, left, and Jimmy Tudela during the fourth quarter of their title game in the U21 division of the 2014 BANMI Youth League last Saturday at the Gilbert C. Ada Gymnasium.

The Ol'Aces' Jimmy Tudela challenges the defense of the 670 Sonics' Emerson Feria, right, and Bryle Alegre, partly hidden

The Ol'Aces' Ignacio Borja, left, and the 670 Sonics' Bryle Alegre jockey for position in the rebound play.

The 670 Sonics' Jun Fidelino goes up for a reverse layup against two Ol'Aces defenders.

The Ol'Aces' Ignacio Borja pulls up for a short jumper.

Ol'Aces coach Preston Basa gestures as he gives instructions to his players during a timeout.

The 670 Sonics' Gerald Flores makes an uncontested layup.

The Ol'Aces and 670 Sonics players battle for the loose ball.

The 670 Sonics' Emerson Feria has nowhere to go against the tight defense of the Ol'Aces' Jimmy Tudela, while Ezra Caro stays back for help defense.

Grizzlies outlast Spurs in 3 overtimes, 117-116

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49ers release McDonald amid further legal trouble

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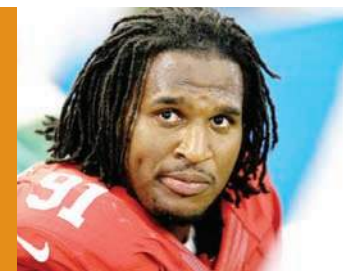

4 age group swim records fall

ROSELYN B. MONROYO
Tsunami Saipan's Miku Tammy, seen here competing in last month's All Schools meet at the Kan Pacific Swimming Pool, set one of the four age group marks in last Saturday's NMISF meet.

By ROSELYN B. MONROYO
roselyn_monroyo@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Four age group records were set during the 2014-2015 NMISF Mid-Season Meet held last Saturday at the Kan Pacific Swimming Pool.

Tsunami Swimming Center Saipan's Kaito Yanai was the first one to make a new mark in Northern Mariana Island Swimming Federation's last timed (official) competition this year and second overall for the 2014-2015 season. The 15-year-old swimmer clocked in 1:11.22 in the boys 15 to 16's 100m breaststroke event to eclipse the 1:12.03 record of Kensuke Kimura registered on March 23, 2013.

The 100m breaststroke was one of the only two events Yanai entered in. He raced in the 200m individual medley and posted 2:24.29, juts less than a second behind his personal best time of 2:23.47.

Yanai's three Tsunami Saipan teammates—Miku Tammy, Ashley Dangol, and Daime Rivera—logged the other age group marks in the weekend meet.

In the girls 11 to 12 division, Tammy submitted 1:17.30 in the 100m backstroke to shatter her own record (1:17.79) set on May 3, 2014. She finished way

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'The Crank' eyes UFC fight

By JON PEREZ
jon_perez@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Competing in the Ultimate Fighting Championship is the main goal of Frank "The Crank" Camacho when he resumes training after the holidays and prepares for a Pacific Xtreme Combat event early next year.

Camacho, who will be returning to Guam on Dec. 20, said it has been his dream to someday fight in the UFC since he started in mixed martial arts at the then Trench Tech gym's first location in Beach Road more than five years ago.

The UFC, which is based in the United States, is the biggest MMA promotion company in the world and features the best and top-ranked fighters in the sport. Dana White is UFC's president and the company has already organized more than 250 fights since the first event was held on Nov. 12, 1993 in Denver, Colorado.

"That has been my goal.

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JON PEREZ
Frank "The Crank" Camacho delivers a punch on the side of South Korean challenger Jae Woong Kim during their non-title bout in last week's Trench Warz 18: Rock & Rumble at the Royal Taga Hall of the Saipan World Resort.

Gamboa, Feds set up showdown with NMSA

By JON PEREZ
jon_perez@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Ronnel Gamboa had a shooting clinic all game long to power the Feds to an 84-49 thrashing of Department of Community and Cultural Affairs in the playoff round of the 2014 IT&E-DYS Inter-government Basketball League last night at the Gilbert C. Ada Gymnasium.

The Feds captain was a one-man scoring machine, tallying a game-high 41 points besides his six steals to help the Feds clinch the second finals berth and arrange a title match with Northern Marianas Sports Association at 6:30pm tonight also at the Ada gym.

NMSA earned an automatic trip to the finals after going undefeated in the double-elimination playoff round, capping its impressive performance with a 68-67 squeaker of the Feds last Monday night. NMASA has a twice-to-beat advantage in the finals.

It was a sorry loss for DCCA, which forced a rubbermatch with the Feds for the last finals ticket after cruising to a 101-68 victory over Customs.

Gamboa scattered 25 points in the first two quarters, helping the Feds zoom to a 43-25 halftime advantage. The Feds got its offensive rhythm back after its usual hot start was grounded by the NMSA defense in their playoff match four days ago.

See GAMBOA on Page 30

JON PEREZ
Feds team captain Ronnel Gamboa, right, goes for a baseline drive against DCCA's Tim Wesley during their playoff game in the 2014 IT&E-DYS Inter-government Basketball League last night at the Gilbert C. Ada Gymnasium.